

# Old Sleuth Library

**FAITHFUL MIKE, THE IRISH HERO.**  
By OLD SLEUTH.

A SERIES OF THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES EVER PUBLISHED.

No. 49

{ SINGLE  
NUMBER. }

GEORGE MUNRO, PUBLISHER,  
Nos. 17 to 27 VANDEWATER STREET, NEW YORK.

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### CHAPTER I.

"WELL, Uncle Mike, fer all the world, what's that yer doin'? It's not a duel yer goin' to fight at your time o' day, is it?"

"Faith, Janie, there's other use for deadly weapons, betimes, than fighting duels or blazing away in fair combat."

"Troth, it's not murther yer intindin', Uncle Mike?"

"Well, Janie, if shootin' a divil in human form is really murther, the day may come whin I'll have to plade guilty to the charge."

The first speaker introduced to our readers was a buxom, rosy-faced Irish maid, and the party whom she addressed was a gray-haired man, seated upon the piazza of a noble mansion which was located in the center of an extensive park.

The old gentleman above-mentioned was engaged in polishing the barrel of a pistol with a piece of chamois skin, and it was this suggestive employment which had attracted the attention of the maid, as she came out from the broad hall of the mansion upon the balcony.

The old man above mentioned would at once be pronounced by an observer a remarkable character.

He was seemingly about fifty years of age; his form was a little above medium height, well-knit and indicative of great personal strength and activity.

His hair was silver white, as were also a mustache and imperial, worn in true military style.

His silver hair would indicate that his age was greater than we have mentioned, were it not that not a wrinkle marred the remarkable smoothness of his really handsome face.

His clear, blue eyes, also, were as bright and beardless as those of a youth of twenty, and there was a resolute expression upon his regular features which proved that age had not tamed his spirit nor weakened in the least the original power of his brain.

The usual expression of his features was mild and cheerful, and yet an ordinary observer

would quickly have discovered that beneath his mild demeanor there struggled a restless, energetic spirit which, when once aroused, would quickly discover the fury and terribleness of an enraged lion.

The old man was seated upon a rustic chair, beside which, upon the floor of the piazza, lay a broad-brimmed hat, while upon the other side, with his head resting upon his fore-paws, was stretched out a massive, fierce-looking blood-hound.

The red rays of an evening sun swept across the valley which stretched out from the grounds of the mansion, and blazed upon the old man, as he arose from his seat and, shading his eyes with his hand, gazed at a solitary horseman who had just appeared upon the road which wound over the crest of a neighboring hill.

The girl Janie was still standing within the broad door-way, when the old man, pointing toward the distant horseman, remarked:

"There comes the devil's imp, Foster Mix, Janie, and by the powers! he's mounted in the manner his master is usually said to ride, upon a coal-black horse."

Janie's countenance fell, and a troubled expression shadowed it, as she exclaimed:

"Dear me! if he's the devil's imp, I wish his master would fly away wid him, for his is the blackest shadow that ever darkens these doors!"

"Why do you say that, Janie?" said the old man, as he turned suddenly toward her, with a strange light gleaming in his clear blue eyes.

"Faith, Uncle Mike, you should know yourself, thin. Why do you ask me?"

"I'll tell you why, Janie—faith, I'd like to know if the observation of we two have brought us to the same conclusion."

"There's little that I have observed, Uncle Mike, except that always after the visits of that man my beautiful young mistress appears as unhappy and gloomy as though some fearful tidings had been brought to her."

"Yer right, Janie. That fiend with his sweet smile and quiet manners always does bring fatal

tidings to this house—and if I ever put a ball through a divil, Janie, I'm thinking it's that fellow's shadow will have a hole in it."

"What! Uncle Mike! so kind an' gentle as ye are, yer wouldn't have blood on yer hands, would ye?"

"Troth, Janie darling, it would be no new thing. I've stood ankle deep in human blood, darling, whin yer old mistress's father—the old general—and I were soldiers together. He was a greater man than I, Janie, and had more education, and ranked as a general; for all that, he and I were like brothers, and whin he died, after sayin' to me, 'Michael, my friend, it's you that'll have to watch over my little Zenie now,' begorra! it was thin that his words didn't fall on idle ears. I've watched his daughter grow from girlhood to womanhood, and the man that brings a shadow of sorrow upon her face has got to rinder an accountin' to me!"

"Faith, I never understood, Uncle Mike—is it you that are her guardian?"

"Not by law, Janie, but by the memory of a friendship that wud lade me to lay down this life in her behalf as aasily as I'd lay me down to slape at night."

"Who is it, thin, Uncle Michael, that is her legal representative?"

"Begorra! that evil-eyed, smooth-faced rascal that's ridin' through the valley toward this house, on a black horse."

"Is Foster Mix the guardian of my young mistress?"

"Indade he is, by the tie of blood and her father's will. But had the old general known what a scoundrel his half-nephew was, he'd hev consigned her to the divil at once, and have done wid it."

While the old man and Janie were talking, the solitary rider who had been seen upon the distant hill had galloped through the valley, and entering the broad gate of the park, walked his steed up the broad avenue toward the house.

A colored boy had witnessed the rider's approach, and as he halted and dismounted in



front of the house, the boy led the black mare away to the stables.

The new-comer, Foster Mix, in his own peculiar style, was not a less remarkable-looking person than the old man previously described.

The former was tall and slender, and although silver threads mingled with his raven hair, he was remarkably well-preserved, and his form gave evidence of being strong and sinewy.

His eyes were gray, and had a cold, steely look that chilled one when he fastened his glance upon them.

His features were regular and his complexion marble-like, as though a globule of perspiration would be frozen into an icicle, should one chance to ooze through the pores of his skin.

His lips were thin, and upon them there rested a hard, cruel, cynical smile.

As the remarkable-looking personage above described ascended the steps of the piazza, the large blood-hound that had lain stretched out beside Faithful Mike rose to his feet and gave utterance to a low, ominous growl, like the rumble of distant thunder.

Foster Mix heard the threatening growl of the dog, and a hateful frown settled upon his face, as he said:

"That beast ought to be chained or shot!"

"Faith," replied Mike, as his frank blue eyes encountered the cold, gleaming orbs of Foster Mix, "he's too civil a dog to be chained, and the fool that would offer to shoot the dog might run a nate risk of gittin' a ball in his own gullet."

"That's your dog, isn't it, Mike?"

"It's my dog, sir."

"Suppose I should order both master and dog off the place, what would you say then?"

"I would say," replied Mike, "that you and yer orders might go to the devil before either I or the dog wud stir a foot."

"Probably you haven't learned yet who I am."

"Well, I've made a pretty shrewd guess, sir."

"Have you guessed that I am the legal master of this domain?"

"If I liver make as quare a guess as that, I'll inform ye of it, sir."

"I reckon that the first information you receive will be to pack up your traps and be off."

"Well, I reckon, Mr. Foster Mix, with all due respect to you, that the individual that tindars me that information will be apt to receive a kick that'll make him go lame for a bit!"

"Well, suppose I give you that information, what will you say then?"

"Faith, whin I receive the information, it will be time enough for me to answer yer question."

"We shall see," said Foster Mix, as he stalked, with a heavy tread, into the house.

## CHAPTER II.

At the very instant that Faithful Mike had espied the solitary rider upon the black horse, a young lady had appeared at a window overlooking the piazza, and had also descried the approaching horseman.

Instantly a look of terror illumined her glorious eyes, a pallor overspread her beautiful face, and she clasped her fair hands to her bosom instinctively, as though to quell the tumultuous throbbings of her agitated heart.

Sadly she turned from the window, and with bowed head and thoughtful step paced the richly carpeted floor of the apartment.

Zenobia Deane was one of those queenly beauties but rarely met with.

Every artistic touch known to nature appeared to be bestowed upon this lovely girl, as the seasons rolled by, bringing her toward womanhood, and molding her in the rarest form of beauty.

Not a charm appeared lacking; every feature seemed cast after a picture stolen by nature from a poet's dream of the form and face of an angel.

Unlike many others who might be her peer in beauty, her features were not marred by an expression that was not pure and artless, showing that with the form and face of an angel had been given an angel's soul also.

Such a beauty was she, that maturer years, if her form was not invaded by disease, or wasted by sorrow, would add to its queenliness.

One gazing upon her might imagine that, like the famous Cleopatra, time would but add to

her charms; or like the Assyrian queen, after whom she was named, she would grow more beautiful with her years.

After pacing once or twice across the large and luxuriously furnished apartment, this beautiful girl suddenly halted in the center of the floor, and raising her head proudly, casting back the wealth of dark hair which crowned it, she exclaimed, in tones of thrilling sweetness:

"Why should I fear this man so? Why should I dread the revealing of what he calls that terrible secret, the knowledge of which would blast my young life?"

Again she paced the floor, and with her beautiful hands clinched, resumed her soliloquy, by exclaiming:

"Were I alone to be the sufferer, I would defy Foster Mix, and dare him to unravel this horrible mystery; but he tells me that one other would suffer with me. Ay! he tells me that the telling of this secret would rob me of this estate. I could stand that and laugh in his face. I could give up every rood of this rich domain, if thereby I could earn the privilege of driving that man from my presence; but my mother—he says the telling of the secret might not kill her, but would make the agony of the remaining moments of her life worse than the torments of hell."

Again Zenie stepped to the window, and stood there watching the approach of Foster Mix as he walked his horse up the avenue toward the house, with a look of loathing and horror upon her face, such as one might wear when watching the slimy coils of a serpent wriggling toward one.

A moment later there came a firm rap at the room door. Zenie turned from the window and said:

"Come in."

The door opened, and with a smile upon his pale, hard face which was intended to be very fascinating Foster Mix entered the room.

"Ah, my lovely cousin!" he said, "every day appears to bring an additional charm to your lovely presence."

"To-day has brought," replied Zenie, "the one dark shadow that overhangs my existence."

"And what is that, beautiful cousin?"

"Your presence!"

"And are you still resolved to speak thus disdainfully and petulantly to me?"

"If a simple word would prevent your ever presenting yourself to me again, I would speak it."

"That word has not been coined, Zenie; but there is a word that you can speak that will remove every shadow from your path forever—that will make your future an elysium of bliss."

"Indeed! and what may that talismanic word be?"

"Simply—Yes."

"Yes! in answer to what?"

"Have I not asked you to be my wife? I ask you again. Say yes, and it becomes the magical word."

"Foster Mix, if a serpent should lay coiled at my feet, and should spring up with its hooded head beside my ear and hiss therein, 'Let me infold you in my coils, and I will warm the chill in your heart,' think you that I could accept such a remedy? Never! Sooner should my heart turn to ice."

"Well, Zenie, what does all that horrible picture amount to?"

"It amounts to this, that I would as soon trust the cold coils of the serpent to warm me as to trust to your love for future happiness."

A dark, fiendish look settled upon the face of Foster Mix, a lurid light flashed in his gray eyes, and his thin lips twitched with passion, as he said, in a low, hissing tone of voice:

"I have borne your petulance, I have smiled at and forgiven your sneers, but I will not bear your insults—not from such as you."

"Foster Mix, what do you mean when you lay such stress upon the words 'Not from such as you?'"

"I mean precisely what I say. I was born a gentleman, and you—"

"Well, what of me?"

"That is my secret."

"Indeed! I catch a suggestion from your words."

"Then, if you have caught the right one, you know the brink on which you stand; therefore, do not dare me, nor defy me, or my secret shall be cast to the four winds of heaven."

"I do defy you, and I dare you to speak!" replied Zenobia, with passionate earnestness.

"I would speak, but even the manner in which you have treated me has not so hardened me that I should wish to be a witness to your agony and torture when my lips are unsealed."

"You dare not speak. You call yourself a gentleman, but I proclaim you a coward."

"A woman can call a Kentuckian a coward, when it would cost a man his life. But listen: do you believe Counselor Wingate a friend of your family?"

"Why do you ask that question?"

"I will explain presently."

"My father trusted him, and, therefore, I know that I can trust him."

"That is sufficient. I have revealed my secret to that eminent lawyer, your father's friend. I have furnished him with the proofs of my revelation. I have also informed him that he is at liberty to make the revelation to you whenever you demand it."

"I shall demand it at once."

"Very well, then, fair cousin; for the present I will relieve you of my hateful presence. When we meet again, you will have learned of my magnanimity. You will learn how I bore your taunts and sneers when I might have crushed you with a word. You will learn how I honored you when I offered you my hand in marriage, and how generous I was, under the circumstances, not to solicit a more questionable relation."

These terrible words, fraught with such fearful suggestion, chilled Zenie's heart with horror. She was stricken speechless, so that when, with a cold, polite bow, Foster Mix moved toward the door, she was unable to call him back and demand an explanation.

With a firm, proud step he left her presence, while Zenie tottered across the room to a sofa, and throwing herself upon it lay like one bereft of reason by some sudden horror.

In the meantime, Foster Mix strode down the stairs, stepped out upon the piazza, and whistled for the colored boy.

The latter quickly appeared, and as commanded, soon brought around the black mare.

As Foster Mix mounted and drove down the broad avenue toward the entrance to the park, the final gray light of the departing day was merged in the darkness of a moonless night.

Slowly the rider of the black horse walked his steed along the forest-shaded road, when suddenly his thoughts and meditations were disturbed by beholding the dark figure of a man in the road directly in front of him.

Bringing his horse to a halt, Foster Mix drew a pistol from his pocket, and after deliberately cocking it, he exclaimed:

"Who's there?"

"Faith! it's Captain Mike Carragher, at your service."

"Well," replied Foster Mix, "as I desire no service at the hands of Captain Mike Carragher, I would advise that gentleman to be off with himself before a bullet interferes with his locomotion."

"Begorra! it's bullet to bullet before I stir a fut!"

## CHAPTER III.

He was an old Mexican soldier, and was used to scenes of blood.

He was a man of undoubted physical courage. He had been a principal in several bloody duels, and was feared and respected for his reckless courage, even by bold, desperate men.

And yet he stayed his hand, and refrained from shooting the stout-hearted old Irishman who barred his passage.

Why did he thus refrain? Because he valued the old man's life, and did not wish to kill him?

No; he cared no more for the life of faithful Mike than he did for the rabbit that burrowed on the road-side.

In fact, in his inmost heart, he wished that Mike were dead, but for certain reasons he preferred that the brave old man should die by some other hand than his.

His reason for this preference was because he knew that Zenie Deane loved and respected the old man.

Loved him because he had been her father's friend and comrade in the Mexican War.

Strange as it may seem—cruel, heartless, and unprincipled as he was—Foster Mix also loved Zenie, and he dared not incur her increased hatred by having the blood of her faithful old friend on his hands.



In reply to Mike's defiant retort, as recorded in the preceding chapter, Foster Mix said:

"I was only joking with you, Captain Mike; a man of your years is safe at my hands."

"No thanks to ye for your clemency, on account of my age; like yourself, I'm an old soldier, and when it comes to a combat, begorra! it's on equal terms we'll meet!"

"See here, Captain Mike, you may succeed in exhausting my patience; in that case, I'll lay my riding-whip across your shoulders, instead of according you the honor of a shot."

"Faith! as far as the honor is concerned, I'd feel as elated over an exchange of shots with you, Foster Mix, as I would with an ordinary highwayman."

The face of Foster Mix turned livid with rage upon hearing these insulting and taunting words.

He saw at a glance that for some reason Mike had waylaid him with the deliberate intention of provoking a quarrel. He knew, also, that the Irishman was a man of courage and daring; but the well-born Kentuckian did not recognize him as a gentleman and an equal, otherwise a combat would instantly have followed the first few words that the two men exchanged.

The firm, cold hand of Foster Mix tightened upon the butt of his pistol, and yet he refrained from firing, for the reason above stated.

A moment's silence followed Mike's last remark, which was finally broken by Foster Mix, who said:

"Regard for your young mistress still prevents me from heeding the insults of one of her menials."

"It's a lie that you spake, Foster Mix, when you called me a menial!"

As the words fell from the Irishman's lips, the Kentuckian leaped from his saddle, and advancing rapidly, struck Mike over the head with his riding-whip.

In an instant he measured his length upon the road, from a blow delivered square between the eyes from Mike's clinched fist.

In an instant he was upon his feet, a pistol-flash illuminated the darkness, and a bullet whizzed in close proximity to Mike's head.

Rapid firing from both instantly succeeded, and in less than two minutes each had emptied his five-barreled pistol.

Although both were excellent shots, owing to the darkness, and the rapidity of their firing, neither of them was struck.

An interval followed the discharge of the last shot; each was watching to see if the other had been injured; at length Mike observed:

"Mount yer horse, and away with ye, Foster Mix; as it is, we stand quits on to-night's diversion. Whin we meet again ayther of us may have better luck."

The well-trained black mare had stood motionless in the road during the pistol discharges, and as Foster Mix stepped forward and seized his horse's bridle, he said:

"It is a truce between us for the present."

"Beggorra! I don't see as it can be anything else, seeing as neither of us have a shot left."

"I have some curiosity to know why I was waylaid and assaulted."

"Faith, ye shall have that same gratified. Ye insulted me in the afternoon."

"And is that the only reason for this night attack?"

"It was not the only reason."

"What other reason had you?"

"Faith, I'll not be mouthing it! If I had killed ye I think I'd done the world a service!"

"Then you are a proclaimed murderer!"

"You are the last man, Foster Mix, to fire that epithet from between yer teeth, with the foul record ye have to yer own credit."

"Why did you want to kill me?"

"To prevent a devil's imp like you from murdering my dead friend's daughter by inches."

"So you are the volunteer champion of Miss Deane, are you?"

"I am, as long as there's power enough left in my forefinger to slip a trigger."

"You made an attack on my life."

"Beggorra! it was you that struck the first blow, fired the first shot."

"What provoked me to it?"

"Ye may say I did, but there's one thing I want ye to know, it was yer own fiery temper that invited the combat; my only intention in matin' ye here was to have a few words wid ye, and give ye a bit of advice!"

"I'll give you some advice now."

"Faith, I'm ready to recave what I'm so willin' to give."

"When next I visit the Deane mansion let me

find you gone, bag and baggage, or it's a certainty that you'll spend the remaining years of your life behind a prison wall."

"Faith, yer friends will have attended a funeral before that happens."

Foster Mix sprang into his saddle, and, as he urged his horse forward, he said:

"We understand each other now; see that you heed my words."

"Faith, we do understand each other," replied Mike, "and I reckon I have shown my teeth as well as you."

Without further words, Foster Mix galloped away beneath the starlight, while Mike traversed the valley road toward home.

After the departure of her cousin, when sufficiently recovered from the shock of his cruel words, Zenie Deane had dispatched a messenger to Louisville, sixteen miles distant, to summon Colonel Wingate, the family lawyer.

Upon the following day, just before noon, the counselor arrived on horseback, and a few moments later was shown into the presence of the daughter of his former friend and employer, General Deane.

No traces of the suffering which she had endured appeared upon the face of the beautiful Zenie, when, after greeting Colonel Wingate, she said:

"Foster Mix has made certain revelations to you. I demand to know their import!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

COLONEL WINGATE was a handsome, gray-haired old gentleman evidently upward of sixty.

His features were handsome and regular, and their expression mild and benignant.

When unexpectedly addressed by Zenie, as recorded, a troubled look shadowed his face, sadness beamed from his eyes, and his voice was sympathetic and tremulous, as he replied:

"I indulged a hope that you would never demand this revelation from me."

"Nevertheless, I do demand it."

"Have you the least idea of the nature of this revelation?"

"I have."

"Please state your idea," and the lawyer buried his face in his hands and was silent.

"I believe," said Zenie, "that this terrible secret relates to my father's will."

"In what manner?" asked the lawyer, without removing his face from his hands.

"From the suggestions thrown out by my cousin yesterday, it suddenly flashed upon my mind that I was to inherit my father's property only on certain conditions."

"What do you suppose those conditions are?"

"My father evidently was blinded to the real character of his nephew Foster Mix."

"That may be possible; but what has that fact to do with the conditions of his will?"

"I have thought that it might be possible that my father, believing in the integrity of my cousin, had made it a stipulation that I should marry Foster Mix to inherit."

"And do you believe that to be the revelation that I have to make?"

"I have thought that it might be."

"What object would your father have in making such a stipulation?"

"He may have thought that thereby he would prevent his orphan child from becoming the victim of some unprincipled fortune-hunter."

"You wrong your father's confidence in yourself."

"Then I have made a mistake, and this is not the fearful secret?"

"You have made a mistake."

"You are privileged to reveal the secret to me?"

"I am."

"Then I demand that you do so."

For a full minute the lawyer remained with his face buried in his hands, without speaking a word. At length he said, still without raising his head:

"Has not your cousin made you an offer of marriage?"

"He has."

"Why do you not accept him as your future husband?"

As the lawyer asked this question, he raised his head and gazed wistfully at Zenie.

The latter's face flushed with anger, her eyes blazed with indignation, as she replied, quickly:

"Have you forgotten that I am pledged to marry Webster Magruder?"

"Webster Magruder is a chivalrous and generous young man."

"Well, what of that?"

"He will release you from your promise."

"And why should I ask him to do so—for the purpose of transferring my troth to such a villain as my cousin Foster Mix?"

"Because of this secret. But why do you call Foster Mix a villain? He has always been recognized as an honorable and chivalrous man, and I have reason to know that he is a generous and magnanimous one."

"Colonel Wingate, I have always been taught to look upon you as a friend to me, as you were a friend to my father."

"I am your friend, and that is why I beseech you to recall your troth from Webster and accept your cousin."

"Colonel, the rack could not wring from me the simple word 'yes' to a proposition from him. I hate him! I loathe him!"

The colonel rose from his seat and paced the floor in silence; after a moment Zenie said:

"Colonel, we are playing at cross-purposes; you certainly would not advise me as you do unless there was a potent reason for your advice."

"There is a potent reason."

"What is it?"

"The secret."

"You say that Foster Mix is generous and magnanimous, and yet he proposes to force me into a marriage with him because he is in the possession of some terrible secret that affects my welfare. Is this the act of a generous man?"

"He loves you."

"And proves his love by forcing me to marry him when he knows that I am already pledged to another."

"Yes; the very fact that he offers you marriage, while possessing this terrible secret, proves that he loves you."

"Colonel, you lay a peculiar stress upon the word marriage. Great heavens! what is the meaning of this significant emphasis?"

"My child, the secret."

"Then unfold that secret at once. The mental torture you are putting me to is worse than the greatest physical agony."

"If you insist, my dear child, I shall be compelled to accede to your request; but as your late father's friend, I beseech you to accept your cousin as your husband, and let the secret be sunk in oblivion forever."

"Think you that, even though I should consent to marry my cousin, that I could rest satisfied without this revelation which is threatening me?"

"The secret could be told if you were once his wife."

"If not now, why could it be told then?"

"Because then the sting would be removed and the consequences averted."

"Do these consequences affect me alone?"

"No; it would be as terrible a revelation to your mother as to you."

"I still insist that the veil be withdrawn, no matter how hideous the horror which it conceals. Before I am called upon to make this terrible sacrifice, I should know why I am compelled to make it."

"There is justice in what you say, and I only hesitated to spare you."

"You need hesitate no longer."

"Are you prepared to meet the shock of the revelation?"

"I am."

"Remember, you compel me to speak."

"I will."

Colonel Wingate's handsome features became contorted with agony as he said, huskily:

"You believe yourself to be General Deane's daughter?"

"Oh, mercy!" fairly screamed Zenie, "what are you about to say?"

"That you are not his daughter!"

"I am not General Deane's child?"

"You are not."

"And you have proofs of this?"

"I have proofs; and believe me, my dear girl, you should have been spared this terrible scene if those proofs were not satisfactory to a lawyer of my experience."

"And this is the secret?"

"The secret is told."

"Whose child, then, am I?"

"Your mother we know; your father must be nameless."

"Why?"

"Because no one knows who he is, not even your mother."



"Oh, God!" gasped Zenie, and she fell insensible at the lawyer's feet.

## CHAPTER V.

WHEN Zenie recovered consciousness she found her maid Janie kneeling at her side. The recovered girl's first question was:

"Where is Colonel Wingate?"

"He told me to hand you this, my dear missis," and she handed her young mistress a note.

The missive was written in French, and ran as follows:

"DEAR CHILD,—I thought it best not to see you for the present; do not betray yourself, by a word, before your attendants, nor confide your secret—at least for the present—to your mother. You will hear from me in the morning; until then, Heaven bless and strengthen you.

"Your friend, WINGATE."

Both of the cautions conveyed in the colonel's note were unnecessary.

Zenie would not betray herself, and she would have permitted her tongue to be scored by red-hot irons before she would voluntarily have whispered the blasting secret in her mother's ears.

Not that she trembled at the humiliating confession as far as it concerned herself; but she would have died before doing aught that would bring a shade of sorrow upon the face of that invalid whom she had looked upon until the present moment as her mother.

For the remainder of the day, and during the following night, after hearing that fatal revelation, Zenie remained in her own room enduring the agony that one might well imagine would follow the reception of such fearful intelligence.

Her mother was absent from home, having gone to the city in order to be near her attending physician.

A bear with a sore head would not have been more restless and cross than was Captain Mike.

The faithful Irishman well knew that Zenie's reported illness was not a physical malady, but the result of Foster Mix's visit the previous day.

As the irritated old soldier, during the hours of the long afternoon, paced beneath the shade of the trees of the park, he gave utterance to occasional exclamations.

"By the powers!" he muttered, "if Foster Mix ever sticks his icicle nose inside the door of that house again, it will be when he crawls over my dead body! Faith, the proud puppy don't look upon me as on equal, or he'd have me out accordin' to the code, and give me a chance to put a ball through his wicked heart, bad luck to him! I have a presentiment that the under-taker will have an order on his account, through me, afore long, yet!"

Upon the following morning Zenie received a package from Louisville, superscribed in the well-known hand of Colonel Wingate.

Alone, in her own room, she read every word of the lengthy document.

It was early in the afternoon before she came forth from her room, and stood for awhile gazing out of the window along the valley road.

Presently, upon the crest of the hill, as upon a day or two previous, Foster Mix appeared, mounted upon his black mare.

"I thought he would come," murmured Zenie, as, with a sigh of agony, she turned from the window, adding: "I can but sacrifice myself to bury this secret forever; then I pray me that it may not be long before I shall be buried also. Henceforth the few remaining hours of my life shall be one of waiting agony for the hour of deliverance."

Again Foster Mix halted his black steed at the foot of the steps leading up to the broad piazza.

Upon this occasion neither Mike nor the fierce blood-hound were witnesses of his approach.

For an hour Foster Mix and Zenobia Deane remained alone together.

At the expiration of that time the former came hurriedly down-stairs, and ordered the family coach to be brought to the door immediately.

For once a flush mantled the cold cheek of that cruel man, and a bright look of triumph gleamed in his steely eyes.

Again he rejoined Zenie, and at the moment the carriage was brought round he came down the piazza accompanied by her.

The latter was in riding costume and heavily veiled.

As Foster Mix assisted Zenie into the carriage, he said:

"Courage, dear one: you have acted a heroic part, and if a life of devotion will partly pay for this sacrifice, so much payment you shall receive. Heaven bless you, for you have made me happy!"

Zenie made no reply, when her companion whispered a few instructions to the driver, after which he entered the coach, and they were whirled away.

Half an hour after the departure of the carriage a horseman in the uniform of a young army officer galloped up the avenue and dismounted at the very spot from whence the coach had started.

The new-comer was not more than twenty-five years of age, and a perfect picture of a handsome, thorough-bred young gentleman.

As he dismounted, Janie appeared at the open door-way, when the young man inquired:

"Well, Janie, where will I find your mistress?"

"She is not at home, sir."

"Where has she gone?"

"Half an hour ago she suddenly left here in a coach with her guardian and cousin, Mr. Foster Mix."

"What is that yer sayin'?" in thunder tones came the inquiry, as Captain Mike came from around the side of the house and stood with blazing eyes glaring at the girl. "Great Heaven!" exclaimed Mike, as his face turned to a deathly whiteness.

"What is the matter, Mike?" anxiously inquired the young man.

"Matter, Captain Magruder!" ejaculated Mike: "matter enough. Go you in that house," he continued, addressing the young officer, "and don't leave it until ye see or hear from me."

Without another word of explanation, the excited Irishman ran away toward the stables.

A moment later he led forth a saddled horse, and as he led his steed around to the front of the mansion, he was followed by the fierce blood-hound formerly described.

Captain Magruder had followed Jane into the house for the purpose of questioning her concerning what had occurred during his absence.

In the meantime the excited Irishman had given his blood-hound a scent, so as to follow the direction taken by the carriage.

As, with a low growl, the hound moved away with his nose close to the ground, Mike leaped into the saddle, and as he urged his horse forward, following the dog, he muttered, between his grating teeth:

"By the powers! he's got the scent; and if this right hand is not withered within the hour, it may prove a trail of blood!"

## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Foster Mix arrived at the Deane mansion upon the day following the reception by Zenie of the lawyer's manuscript containing the disclosures which had made her so miserable there was an assurance in his manner and a triumphant gleam in his eye characteristic of one who believed that they had won a victory.

Meeting Janie in the hall, he inquired where her young mistress was.

"Miss Deane has not been out of her room since the day before yesterday."

"Is she so ill as to be confined to her bed?"

"I think she is, sir," replied Janie; and the girl volunteered the additional information that she did not think her young mistress was well enough to see anybody.

This latter suggestion was a voluntary misrepresentation of Janie's, as she was well aware that her young mistress, although secluded in her room, was not really physically ill.

A keen, observant person can usually detect a doubtful assertion, and as Foster Mix was a very shrewd man, it struck him instantly that Janie's information was questionable.

After a moment, he said, in a peremptory tone:

"You will please inform my cousin of my presence!"

"I would rather not disturb Miss Deane, sir."

Foster Mix fastened his terrible eye upon the girl, and said, almost fiercely:

"Do as I bid you!"

Janie was but a woman, and she feared the stern man before her, and reluctantly she proceeded up the broad staircase to the room of her young mistress.

It was full fifteen minutes before she returned, when she announced to Foster Mix,

whom she found pacing the hall, that her young mistress awaited him.

Deliberately the stern man ascended the stairs, and knocking on the door of the room where he had held his former interview with Zenie, heard a voice bid him enter.

When Foster Mix opened the door, he beheld his cousin standing in the middle of the room, and he started with surprise upon recognizing her changed appearance.

And well he might start with surprise.

The proud beauty of the day before, whose glorious form and glowing features had presented a perfect picture of youthful health, now looked pale and wan, as though she had just arisen from a bed of wearing sickness.

It did not seem possible that, in so brief a period of time, sorrow alone could have wrought such a remarkable change.

Not only was there a physical change, but one glance was sufficient to indicate that the proud, defiant spirit that had flashed from her beautiful eyes was broken and subdued.

After his first exclamation of surprise, Foster Mix said, in tender tones and manner, for this man could seem tender, even while his heart was throbbing with hatred:

"Zenie, you have been ill."

"I have," was the reply, in tones so different from their former spiritedness, that a chill trembled even over the bloodless frame of Foster Mix.

After a moment's awkward silence, the latter again spoke, and said:

"You have seen Colonel Wingate?"

"I have."

"You persisted in demanding my secret?"

"I did."

"Oh, Zenie!" exclaimed Foster Mix, in tones of well-simulated sorrow, "why did you not spare yourself and me this terrible humiliation?"

"It is better that I should know the truth."

"Why?"

"Because I will now better understand how to make a compact that will prevent even the faintest rumor of this horrible revelation from reaching my mother's ears."

"You mean, Zenie," said Foster Mix, in a tone of mock delicacy, "the ears of General Deane's widow."

"You are precise to be cruel so as the more fully to impress upon my mind the fact that legally I have no right to use the endearing term of 'mother.'"

"Forgive me, dear cousin, I spoke without malice; I see now my words were ill chosen."

"You address me as cousin—I will assist you to draw the legal line distinctly. If General Deane was not my father, you are not my cousin."

"But, Zenie!" exclaimed Foster Mix, warmly, and dropping upon one knee, "if you are not my cousin, you can become a relative under a dearer name—my wife."

"Do you still offer honorable marriage to the offspring of unwedded parents?"

"Zenie, how you misjudge me! Was I not the possessor of this secret when I first sought your hand? Was it not my purpose to marry you, and save you the humiliation of knowing the truth by keeping the secret locked in my bosom?"

"Listen to me one moment, Foster Mix: I have been compelled to bear this humiliation. How could you bear it if, when once your wife, this terrible story should become the property of your friends."

"It never can become known; the secret is known but to three persons—to you, Colonel Wingate, and myself."

"But, my mother, my natural mother, does she not possess the secret?"

"No, she does not."

"Are you sure?"

"I am sure."

A red glow mantled Zenie's cheeks, and a scornful light gleamed in her eyes, betraying a remaining spark of her old proud spirit, as she said:

"It is strange that your words should be at such variance with the statements contained in the manuscript I received from Colonel Wingate."

"In that document I am informed that my mother—my real mother—has been your pensioner for years."

The cheeks of Foster Mix became tinged with a red glow—it was a blush of shame.

He was a proud man, and instantly recognized that he had been detected in a falsehood.

He was a ready-witted man, and suffered



himself to be discomposed for an instant only, stating, after a moment, that he had concealed the fact which he now acknowledged only to spare Zenie's feelings.

"I am not asking to be spared! I seek no mercy for myself. I only wish to save the feelings of General Deane's widow."

The latter part of Zenie's last speech was spoken in tones of dramatic bitterness.

"I can silence Hepsy Doane."

"Then Hepsy Doane is the person whom from henceforth I must call mother. How kind fate has been to permit me to preserve my present initials."

"Zenie, why should we dwell upon this horrible subject. You spoke of a compact before the altar. We can complete such a compact as will banish from our minds forever even the memory of the name of this woman, Hepsy Doane."

"What?" asked Zenie, in tones of scathing bitterness, "would you have me ignore my filial duties—deny my mother?"

"I would; your mother has not set eyes upon you since you were twelve hours old; it is not necessary that you should ever see her. Your presence will bring her no joy, and might drive you mad."

"I have thought of this," said Zenie, after a moment's thought; "and only for one reason would I consent to ignore my duty to Hepsy Doane. I owe more to that noble woman who nursed and reared me, and gave me all of a mother's exceeding love, believing me to be really and truly her own daughter."

"Yours is the only righteous view of the matter, Zenie; you owe everything to Mrs. Deane in the way of filial love and duty—nothing to Hepsy Doane."

Again there followed an interval of silence, broken at length by Foster Mix, who said:

"Shall we enter into a compact?"

"Yes," replied Zenie, and she buried her face in her hands and wept.

#### CHAPTER VII.

FOSTER MIX knew that the victory was with him.

He had run his game to earth; the cunning threads of his well-planned scheme had been skillfully woven.

Zenie wept.

Foster Mix smiled a cold, complacent smile of a human fiend that had made the conquest of a pure soul.

The man who had thus triumphed did not see fit to interrupt the weeping of his lovely companion.

Full five minutes passed, and naught broke the silence that pervaded that room but the occasional sobs that struggled up from the agonized heart of the scoundrel's victim.

Finally Zenie wiped the tears from her eyes, and Foster Mix exclaimed, with an assumed manner of tender enthusiasm:

"Zenie, it may now appear to you like an act of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation to reward my faithful love by a bestowal of your hand, but I hope in the coming years my watchful care and tenderness will make the act sown in sorrow bloom and flourish in joy and thankfulness."

"In consenting to become your wife, Foster Mix, I ask nothing from you but the faithful guardianship of this terrible revelation which has compelled me to consent to become your wife, so that it shall never reach the ears of her whom I have always believed to be my mother."

"The guardianship of that secret shall be the condition for the vows that we exchange before the altar."

"When shall our marriage take place?" asked Zenie.

"Within the present hour," replied Foster Mix.

"Why so soon?"

"There are reasons which make it necessary that we should be thus hasty."

"But how shall we explain the necessity of this remarkable marriage?"

"It is easier to give satisfactory explanations than to delay the nuptials."

"But my mother—Mrs. Deane?"

"I will guarantee to satisfy her."

Twice Zenie paced the floor to and fro, with her hands clasped to her throbbing temples; then, confronting Foster Mix, she exclaimed, in tones betraying one utterly bereft of hope and prepared to encounter any fate:

"I am in your hands—I will do as you direct."

"You are right, Zenie; do not falter, and you will never regret your decision."

With the command for Zenie to prepare herself for a ride, Foster Mix left the room.

When alone, Zenie dropped upon her knees, and clasping her hands together, ejaculated:

"Oh, Heaven! let not this terrible sacrifice be followed by a curse!"

Rising to her feet again, she clasped her hands to her throbbing temples, and in tones harrowing in their utterings of despair, murmured:

"Oh, Frank! Frank! how shall I ever explain to you this day's perfidy? Perfidy? No, no—not perfidy! I must clear myself of that! I must let him know that I have not been false, but that I am the victim of a cursed fate."

She wrung her hands, and in her wild agony stamped her delicate foot upon the floor. Finally, again the words burst from her lips, and as her features became hard and resolute, she exclaimed:

"No, no; let me bear it all. It is better that he should think that I have been false. It will save his proud heart from breaking. Scorn and contempt will supplant his love. Oh, Heaven! that it should ever be that he should scorn me! And yet it is better thus—better that one heart should break than two! Did he know the reason that I cast him off, the disappointment to his great love would kill him; but a knowledge of my supposed treachery will cause him first to hate and then forget me. Oh, heavens! this is misery!"

A few moments later, after having ordered the carriage, as recorded in a previous chapter, Foster Mix re-entered the room, where a moment before he had learned of his triumph.

He had not long to wait, when he was joined by Zenie, clad in a dark suit, and heavily veiled.

Once in the carriage, they were whirled along at a rapid rate, until they reached a spot where two roads branched off in different directions.

The driver had received his orders, and took the left-hand road.

As the carriage turned, Zenie chanced to glance out of the window, when her eye fell upon the form of a horseman.

A startled cry burst from her lips, and she sunk back on the cushions of her seat, and fairly groaned in anguish.

Foster Mix, who was closely watching his companion, observed her glance out of the coach window, and then saw the agonized expression that swept over her countenance.

Leaning forward, he also glanced out of the window, to discover what had caused his companion's excitement.

His eye fell upon a young gentleman in the undress uniform of an army officer, dashing along on a spirited horse at a furious rate.

A smile of devilish triumph broke over the classic features of this evil man, as he muttered, in a low, peculiar tone, so low that it was unheard even by his companion:

"Ah! I was just in time. It was well I made no delay! The presence of that rash boy, Frank Magruder, would have turned the scales against me!"

Not a word was exchanged between Foster Mix and Zenie, until the carriage was brought to a halt before the vine-covered porch of a small church edifice; then Foster Mix said:

"Zenie, we are at the door of the church."

Zenie made no reply, and her companion alighted, and reached forth his hand to assist her to alight also.

Unresistingly, the veiled girl placed her hand in his, and stepped out beside him.

The church door was closed, and appeared to be locked, when Foster Mix exclaimed, impatiently:

"I directed that clergyman to be on hand, and await my coming."

"Then you counted so surely on winning my consent?" remarked Zenie, in tones tinged with a slight sneer.

"Dear cousin," replied Foster Mix, "I pray you, that after the vows exchanged before that altar within, no sneer shall fall from your lips; let your last bitter remark be the last of its kind."

Zenie bowed her head affirmatively, but said nothing.

Without exchanging another word, the couple awaited some moments, when they were joined by a plain-looking old man, who proved to be the sexton.

While opening the door, the latter said, in answer to the inquiry of the gentleman, that the clergyman would be on hand in a few moments.

There is something awe-inspiring in the interior of an empty church, and the party of

whom we write appeared to be peculiarly oppressed with feelings of sadness as they silently walked along the carpeted aisle.

A moment later the clergyman appeared.

After a few whispered words between him and Foster Mix, the strange couple took their position before the altar.

#### CHAPTER VIII.

THE formula of the marriage ceremony is too well known to even moderate readers to require a detailed description in our narrative.

It was with a face rigid as marble that Zenobia Deane stood beside the man who was to become her husband.

There is frequently more tragic element in an act silently performed where no actual tragedy occurs.

It does not always require the murderous gleam of the knife, or the flash of the pistol-shot to the consummation of a dramatic horror.

It was a moral tragedy about to be enacted before the sacred altar.

Let our readers consider the fact of a beautiful woman fated to accept as her husband a man whose tenderest words froze her heart.

The ceremony had proceeded uninterrupted up to that moment, when through the dark recesses of that gloomy church rolled the echo in monotonous tones of that stereotyped inquiry:

"Are there any present who know of any reason why these two persons before me should not be pronounced husband and wife?"

A weird silence followed this usually superfluous question.

A singular fatality caused the clergyman to repeat the important inquiry.

Again an interval of silence followed, and although there were none in the church save those gathered about the altar, still the clergyman, prompted by some strange impulse, or by the force of habit, cast his eye around the gloomy interior as though expecting some one to suddenly spring up and stop the bans.

The clergyman appeared to wait longer than usual, as though he expected a response—but none came. At length, Foster Mix said, in a husky whisper:

"Let the ceremony proceed."

Turning toward the intended bride, the clergyman said:

"Zenobia, do you take this man to be your wedded husband, to love, cherish and—"

At this instant a fearful howl was heard just within the vestibule.

The clergyman's face became overspread by a deathly pallor; the unfinished question appeared frozen upon his lips, while his eyes seemed dilated with superstitious terror.

The face of the groom also became as white as the rigid face of a corpse, and yet, with startling energy, he exclaimed fiercely, while casting a furtive glance over his shoulder:

"Go on, sir! go on!"

Tremulous with excitement, the clergyman essayed to proceed, when a second doleful howl was heard, followed by a succession of quick, guttural barks.

Again the clergyman stopped, as though paralyzed with terror.

"Proceed! proceed!" exclaimed the groom.

For an instant an awful silence followed.

"By heavens! proceed, sir!" vociferated the groom.

A third time the clergyman essayed to go on.

"Zenobia, will you take this man—"

Again he was interrupted by the clatter of horses' feet at the church porch, followed by the deep bay of a hound.

The next instant a gray-haired man, with silver locks streaming upon his shoulders, came dashing up the aisle toward the altar, shouting:

"Stop! stop! stop everything. Begorra! the wurruld on its axis!"

Foster Mix turned, and fastened his eyes upon the advancing Captain Mike.

The next instant his hand was clapped behind him, and withdrawn, armed with a cocked revolver.

The weapon was leveled at the old man's head; a flash and report followed, but the murderous bullet flew harmlessly up in the church loft.

Just as the intended murderous hand touched the trigger, an enormous blood-hound, with flecks of foam drooping from his distended jaws, like an unleashed tiger sprung with a terrific growl at the throat of the intended groom, and the pistol exploded in the air.

"Back, Tiger! back!" yelled Captain Mike.



The well-trained hound, obedient to his master's voice, released its fatal grip ere he had fairly fastened his fangs in his victim's throat, and crawled in a cowed manner back, crouching upon the floor, with his red eyes still fastened on the prostrate man.

As the hound sprung upon him and bore him to the floor, Foster Mix dropped his weapon, which faithful Mike seized.

During the whole exciting and tragic scene, the intended bride had stood motionless, as though frozen to the spot.

As Foster Mix attempted to rise to his feet, Captain Mike exclaimed:

"Zenie darling, by everything under the sun, moon and stars, what druv ye to commit this rash act?"

Turning, and flashing her glorious eyes upon Mike, Zenie asked in icy tones:

"How dared you interfere in this tragic manner? By what right do you interfere with my actions?"

Captain Mike started back in an attitude of surprise upon hearing these words.

For an instant also a glimmer of surprise flashed over the pale features of Foster Mix, who had risen to his feet.

The surprised look was chased from the latter's face by a smile of triumph as the truth fastened upon his mind with what a well-forged and heavy chain he had bound his victim.

"By what right do you interfere with any act of mine?" again asked Zenie, in firm, deliberate tones.

"Darlin', he's druv ye mad!" exclaimed Mike.

"No, Captain Carragher; I am not mad!"

"And ye ask me by what right I would save ye from that scoundrel?"

"I do!"

"Thin I'll tell ye, darlin'."

And Mike upraised his hand dramatically, as he added:

"There was a noble man once, himself wounded and bleeding, who crawled over a heap of ghastly slain to find the body of his friend.

"He found his friend with the life-blood oozing from his veins; and yet, the old hero, hardly able to stand himself, lifted his friend's bleeding body in his arms, and staggered with it to the doctor, who stanching the wounds, and saved his life."

A moment Mike's utterance was choked by sobs, but at length he continued:

"Zenie, it was I that lay for dead upon the field, and it was your hero-father who, at the peril of his own life, saved mine!

"Afterward, together, that old hero and I stood many times side by side amid the shock of battle; and at last, just before the muffled drum was to beat his dead march, with almost his last breath, and his very last effort of strength, he placed his feeble hand in mine, and said:

"Comrade, protect my orphan when I am gone, so when we shall meet again on the other side, we can still be brothers!"

"Now, Zenie darlin', dare ye ask me why I interfere with your acts?"

Despite the desperate resolution which had chilled the warm blood of Zenie, until it appeared as though every generous impulse had been frozen, she stepped toward the faithful old Irishman, and with tears streaming down her lovely face, said:

"Noble old hero, you have been faithful to your trust; but your zeal has led you into error. I have pledged my word to marry Foster Mix, and I shall redeem my pledge!"

"No, no, my darlin'! if ye have given a pledge, 'twas forced from ye by some evil tale of yon foul schamer! Mark me, child, I take upon myself the responsibility of sayin' that ye shall not marry that man."

"I have passed my word."

"If ye kape it, it will be over my dead body; and the daughter shall not destroy the life the father saved."

Foster Mix moved a step as though to advance toward Mike, when the old Irishman leveled a pistol at his head, saying:

"Back, sir! I don't want yer blood on my hands, but if ye approach me, ye die!"

Foster Mix had dropped his weapon, and was held at bay.

"Let there be no violence," exclaimed Zenie; addressing Foster Mix, she added: "Be forbearing and patient, and do not fear—the ceremony shall proceed."

The clergyman, fearing violence, took it upon himself to ask:

"Why do you wish to prevent this ceremony?"

"Because yon man would force that dear girl to marry him when she loathes him."

"Has she not announced her readiness to have the ceremony proceed? From your own statement, I can not see that you have any legal right to interfere."

"To blazes wid legality when an angel is about to become the prey of the devil!"

"Captain Carragher," said Zenie, "listen to me. I have well considered my determination; you must forbear—the ceremony must proceed. I have promised to marry Foster Mix, and I will!"

A peculiar expression flashed over the handsome features of Captain Mike, as he inquired blandly and with a tingle of Irish humor in his tones:

"Zenie darlin', do ye consider a promise sacred and bindin'?"

"I do."

A cunning smile illuminated Mike's countenance, as he said, quickly:

"Then what the devil do ye think of your promise to Captain Frank Magruder?"

Without a word, Zenie sunk insensible before the altar.

"Begorra!" muttered Mike; "thus endeth the first lesson!"

## CHAPTER IX.

No more striking illustration of the peculiarly Irish characteristics of our hero could be furnished than his humorous remark in the midst of a scene so tragic in its interest.

It may appear cruel and harsh that Faithful Mike should have accepted such a startling *dénouement* with such unequivocal satisfaction.

It is not strange though when we consider that he was a man who had been inured upon the battle-field to scenes of blood and carnage.

He had seen strong men frequently faint at the sound of the first gun who afterward became heroes.

To him the mere fainting of a girl was a simple matter in itself, but very important under present circumstances, as it favored his purpose.

Foster Mix would have rushed to Zenie's assistance, but Mike jumped before him, and at the muzzle of a pistol, ordered him back.

As previously recorded, the intended groom was not a coward, and it is a matter of record that the bravest men possess the most discretion.

An inexperienced man might rush upon death, where a more experienced one would bide his time.

Foster Mix was not cowed nor afraid, but he knew he was dealing with a man who was as brave and determined as himself.

He knew that the Irishman also possessed the advantage; and, unarmed as he was, to advance would be a certain death.

Mike raised the unconscious form of Zenie upon his arm, still keeping a wary watch upon Mix.

Having raised Zenie, the Irishman called the attention of his hound, and made peculiar signs, while pointing to the disappointed groom.

A low growl signified the intelligence of the well-trained beast.

Mike moved from before the altar with his burden.

In the excitement and frenzy of the moment, Foster Mix was about to follow, when suddenly the hound made a great bound, landing directly in his path, and crouched there with gleaming eyes and crunching jaws.

"As you value your life, don't move!" called Mike.

"You have won for the present, scoundrel!" came the fierce reply.

"Ay! and Heaven willin', I'll hould me advantage! Ye'll be welkim at the house, Foster Mix, at yer pleasure, and we'll have this matter settled for ever."

Without another word, Mike turned, and proceeded out of the church.

Placing Zenie, who was recovering consciousness, in the carriage, Mike went to where his horse was standing, and, facing him about, gave him a smart lick.

"Faith, he'll find his way to the stable!" remarked Mike, as the horse galloped off; then, returning to the carriage, he told the driver, who was a boy belonging to the Deane estate, to drive home at the top of his speed.

During all this time the unarmed and helpless Foster Mix stood in his tracks, not daring to interfere, as at the least movement a warning

growl from the huge beast informed him that in an instant he might be torn to ribbons.

During this exciting scene, both the clergyman and the sexton had been held spell-bound.

Thus the moments passed, when suddenly a peculiar whistle was heard.

Up and away bounded the hound.

Foster Mix rushed out of the church porch, and the baffled groom arrived just in time to see the carriage, which bore away his almost bride, whirling down the road amid a cloud of dust.

Foster Mix was a cool-headed man; he had passed that fiery period of youth, when, under similar circumstances, he would have raved and ranted, and stamped and fumed, and torn his hair and sworn a direful vengeance in frenzy and madness.

He did none of these things; his face hardly betrayed the rage that burned way down in his heart; he even smiled a cold, bitter smile, as he said, slowly, but distinctly:

"I could not have anticipated this interruption from that bad old fool! but, bah!" he added, snapping his fingers, "what will it amount to in the end? I will not be responsible if it becomes necessary to tell Frank Magruder the romance of Hepsy Doane. Ha! ha!" he laughed, "every link of the chain that I have forged is so strongly welded that it will bear any strain. Frank Magruder will scorn an alliance with a nameless daughter of Hepsy Doane! while I—well—well—I ain't so proud."

Calmly as though he had only been an usher at a friend's nuptials, and as though the whirling coach that was disappearing down the road bore away the bridal-party instead of the woman who had been snatched from his side at the very altar, the baffled man re-entered the church, and after exchanging a few words with the still dazed clergyman, placed his hat upon his head, and leisurely sauntered down the aisle as though he were the most contented and self-complacent man in Kentucky.

In the meantime, as the coach-horses sped away over the road, Zenie fully recovered consciousness.

When fully restored, and finding herself alone in the carriage with Mike, she asked, excitedly:

"What has happened?"

"Faith, darlin', I'll tell ye all about it when yer home!"

"Tell me now! I demand that you tell me now!"

"Whist, darlin', whist! Just be calm and quiet, like yer usual self! Faith, I'm so confused like, that I couldn't put two words together."

"Am I a wife?" almost frantically asked Zenie.

"A wife, is it? Now what the devil put sich an idea into yer head?"

"Captain Carragher, you are trifling."

"Trifling, is it, an' ye talking about bein' a wife?"

There was a stern dignity in Zenie's manner at times that always impressed the person with whom she was conversing.

At this moment she assumed that dignity, and said:

"Captain Mike, you must tell me exactly what occurred at that church! I am now convinced that you have something to concede, and that you are playing a part in order to distract my attention!"

"Well, darlin', sooner or later ye must know what happened at the church. So I may as well tell yez at once."

"Do not attempt to deceive me, Captain Mike."

"Troth I might thry to bluff ye off, Zenie darling; but ye can trust me, that I'll not tell ye a lie. That's a thing that I never did in my life, and I'm too ould at present to attempt to masher that accomplishment."

"I was about to be married to my cousin Foster Mix, was I not?"

"Ye were, surely."

"The ceremony was not completed."

"Thank Heaven it was not!"

"Then I must return immediately to that church, and the marriage must proceed."

"I am d—d if you return to that church, and that same if the marriage shall go on."

"Dare you use force to prevent me?"

"Dare I use force? Faith, darlin', I'll bind ye hand and fut first."

"Captain Mike, is this the way you fulfill my father's trust to his child?"

"Begorra, that's just the way I'm goin' ter fulfill it, precisely."



"Are you determined to forfeit my affection and respect?"

"Faith! if takin' a foolish girl home to her mother is goin' to cost me her affection, faith, I believe I'll have to stand the cost."

"Oh, heavens! my mother!" gasped Zenie, and she buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

## CHAPTER X.

"THAT'S right, me dear girl—cry away. It's the roots of many a smile those tears will be afther watherin'."

"Captain Mike, I'm powerless in your hands!"

"Begorra, darlin', I'm glad to hear ye say that. It just proves that I've won the battle."

"Oh, my father's trusted friend, if you only knew!" sobbed Zenie.

"Knew what, darlin'? Faith, I'm an ould man, and have a right to call ye by that tinder title."

"Knew the necessity of my marriage with Foster Mix."

"I have much to learn before I'll be convinced of that fact, sure."

"But there is a reason why I should marry him."

"Ay—one of his own creatin'."

"No, no, Captain Mike; Foster Mix has acted nobly, magnanimously, toward me."

"Many a scoundrel raises the devil under a mask of magnanimity."

"Oh, Captain Mike, do not force me to even hint at the necessity of this marriage."

"Divil a hint do I require; it's enough that I know the necessity of preventing it."

"And yet you claim to love me?"

"Ay, as tenderly as though you was me own child."

"Would you save me from shame?"

"Ay, and misery, too."

"Then drive me back to that church immediately."

"Not if I have to put a bullet in the brain of both horses."

"A marriage with Foster Mix is the only thing that will save me from shame. He has proved his nobility of soul in offering honorable marriage to such as I am."

"Oh, my God!" murmured Mike, and a look of agony settled upon his face and a wild glare in his eyes, as though death had suddenly fastened upon his vitals.

He strove to speak, but only a husky gurgle issued from his throat; his lips twitched, and convulsive shudders trembled over his frame.

Beholding the effect of her words upon the old man, all other thoughts were banished from Zenie's mind save solicitude for him.

She clasped his hands in both of hers, and dropping upon her knees on the floor of the coach, exclaimed:

"Oh, my friend—my father—what have I done?"

Great beads of sweat started upon the forehead of the old man; his bosom rose and fell as though he was struggling for breath. At length he uttered one great sob, and tears fell from his eyes, as he murmured, finally:

"Oh, darlin', darlin', ye have broken my heart!" Then, suddenly, a wondrous change came over his face; his eyes blazed with a terrible light, while his features became set and rigid. Calling to the driver, he ordered him to stop.

The instant the coach was brought to a stand, the old man forced open the door and leaped out upon the road.

"Where are you going, and what are you going to do?" almost screamed Zenie.

In a voice so changed and altered from its usual tone that Zenie hardly recognized it, Captain Mike replied:

"I'm going to send a bullet through the heart of Foster Mix!"

"Hold, hold! What do you mean?"

"Bide ye there, Zenie—bide ye there. Thank Heaven yer father never lived to feel the misery of this day. Faith, I'd never dare to mate him in the wurruld to come if I allowed the despoiler of his child to live!"

"Great heavens!" ejaculated Zenie, as it suddenly flashed upon her mind the peculiar significance that the old man had attached to her words. Wildly she exclaimed:

"Captain Mike, you misunderstood me!"

A bright smile broke over the old Irishman's face, as he exclaimed:

"Thin it was not shame ye meant?"

"How shall I explain?" murmured Zenie.

"Tell me the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Zenie was in a dilemma; she could not make a confidant of her old friend, and yet she felt that it was necessary to say something to remove the horrible idea that he had conceived.

"Captain Mike," she asked, "did you ever see a copy of my father's will?"

"I never did."

"Certain conditions in that will make it necessary that I should marry my cousin."

"Nay, nay, child! I'm too old a goat to nibble at those kind of sprouts. Your father never left a stipulation, the unfulfillment of which would entail disgrace upon his child."

Zenie's face was covered with blushes as she said, with an emphasis whose meaning could not be understood:

"My old friend, the necessity has only arisen within the last eight-and-forty hours."

"Mind, my child, were Foster Mix dead, could you marry Frank Magruder with honor?"

"I could."

"That's enough said. There's but one reason that could stand between you and that brave young soldier."

"Would to Heaven that there were but one!" murmured Zenie.

Mike re-entered the carriage. Zenie said nothing more about returning to the church, and an hour later they arrived in sight of home.

Few words had passed between them after their stoppage upon the road; but as they arrived in sight of the mansion, a recollection flashed over Zenie's mind that had been banished by the excitement of the day, and suddenly she exclaimed:

"I can not return home."

"And why not?" asked Mike.

"How can you ask, since you have learned the incidents of to-day?"

"Well?" said Mike, with provoking nonchalance.

"I saw Captain Magruder galloping toward our house as we were on our way to the church."

"Ay, and it's blamed lucky he didn't see you. Troth he's left the house now, I trust; and divil a word will he ever learn from me of this day's mad prank of yours."

"Stop the coach," said Zenie.

"Nonsense. Faith, it's aisy enough to account for your absence."

"Captain Mike, despite all that has passed between us and your bitterest opposition, I must and will marry Foster Mix."

"I'll be hanged if you will without my consent, and that ye'll never git."

"Stop the coach, or I will throw myself out into the road. I can not, I will not meet Frank Magruder."

Captain Mike ordered the driver to stop, and then said:

"Zenie, ye have some terrible secret upon yer mind. First as last ye may as well out with it. There is some strange reason for this sudden determination to marry a man who so recently ye loathed. There, beyond in the house, awaits as gallant a youth as iver drove a spur into a horse's flank. Now, then, my girl, ye have my life at yer service. Ye are the betrothed wife of Captain Magruder. Come, now, like the daughter of General Deane, an old soldier whose honor was as bright as the gleam of his sword, go straight to yon house and tell that brave, honorable man the true reason why ye wish to throw him over and marry that cunning schemer, Foster Mix."

"Captain Mike, you know not what you demand."

"Faith, I do well."

"You would make me the destroyer of Captain Magruder."

"Faith, thin, child, it's betther to kill him with the truth to his face, than stab him with a lie behind his back."

## CHAPTER XI.

It appeared as though at least Zenie must lose her reason under the conflicting and agonizing emotions which agitated her. In answer to Captain Mike's words, she said:

"You know not what you ask. I can not—I can not meet Captain Magruder."

Mike was inexorable, and while firmly insisting upon Zenie's compliance, the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard, and a moment later Foster Mix dashed by them, and galloped straight to the house.

"Ah, ha!" muttered Mike, "there goes the divil himself."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Zenie, "Foster Mix and Frank will meet!"

"Well, I don't see but what they will; and if Captain Magruder knew what had been going on this day, I'm thinking he'd make a sieve of the carcass of Foster Mix."

"Oh! if I could only die," ejaculated Zenie.

"Faith! if I am, Zenie, that's one thing I'll have ye to know, every word that I spake to you that isn't one of kindness and encouragement wrings my ould heart, so that, like you, I could exclaim, 'Would that I were dead!'"

"How will this all end?"

"If I could persuade you, darlin', to follow my advice, it would all end happily."

"What would you have me do?"

"I would have ye, darlin', go straight to that house, and in the prisence of those two men, give your reasons for the occurrences of this day."

"Were my happiness alone involved, Captain Mike, I would do it in a moment; the terrible story should be told to Frank, and he be permitted to do as his heart prompted."

"Zenie darlin', when ye trust to the heart of Captain Frank Magruder, ye may rist assured that next to love of the Lord of Heaven there's none truer than Captain Frank's."

"I know that, my friend, and that is why I dare not tell him. This fearful story would break his heart."

"Is Foster Mix a partner in your secret?"

"He is."

"Then you may rest assured that from other lips than yours, Frank Magruder will hear what you call this fearful story."

"No; the condition of my marriage with him is that this terrible secret shall be kept inviolate."

"Zenie, would you trust the word of a man who, by foul means, would force you to break a sacred betrothal to become his wife?"

"Once his wife, it will be as much his interest as mine to bury the story in oblivion."

"But you'll never be his wife, darlin'."

"What shall I do?"

"Act like the daughter of General Deane. Listen; why not confide in me?"

"I will; but you must first manage to dismiss Captain Magruder; I can not meet him and live."

"Zenie, under any other circumstance it would be better for you to meet Captain Frank and die, than to marry Foster Mix and live."

"Zenie, you have just listened to the language of a friend."

This latter remark came from a third voice.

As the bushes beside the road were parted, a handsome young man, in the undress uniform of a United States army officer, confronted the old Irishman and Zenie.

There are times when finely constructed nervous organizations can be too suddenly and thoroughly shocked, to find relief in the usual result of sudden emotion—a fainting fit.

The powers become paralyzed, the quick motion of life frozen, as it were, for a moment, when every nerve is benumbed, and nothing acts normally but the brain.

This was the result in the instance above related.

Upon the sudden and startling appearance of the young man, whose remark indicated that he had overheard at least a part of the conversation, Zenie did not faint, but a low cry burst from her lips, and then every nerve appeared to become paralyzed.

She stood gazing with a wild stare in her eyes, but not a syllable fell from her lips after the first cry.

Full half a minute passed, when the stranger advanced and would have caught the fair girl in his arms; but, even as his arms were outstretched to clasp her, her physical and vocal power returned as it had vanished, and, in wild terror, starting from him as she would from a hissing serpent, she exclaimed, her manner almost maniacal:

"Back! back! do not approach me! there's a fearful shadow between you and me!"

"The Lord reigns, and the devil's trying to!" was the sententious remark of Captain Mike, as he deliberately seated himself upon a fallen tree beside the road, and awaited the final development of this startling scene.

Captain Frank Magruder, with features pale as marble, and with his form trembling with agitation, stopped, and making no further effort to clasp Zenie, exclaimed:

"My heart's wife! there is but one shadow that can come between you and me—the shadow of the grave settling upon either one of us!"



There are some delicate organizations that in moments of startling excitement rise equal to the occasion.

Suddenly some strange influence seemed to inspire Zenie; a semblance of her former disdain was shown in her manner, and the bitterness of a sneer mingled with the tones of her voice, as she said, scornfully:

"The Honorable Captain Magruder has been an eavesdropper!"

"No, Zenie, I have not been an eavesdropper. I was wandering through the glen when I heard voices; immediately I hastened in this direction, and while approaching, not noiselessly, but with heavy tread, I overheard certain exclamations that filled me with astonishment; in your excitement you failed to recognize my approach."

"Faith, and I'm one that am glad that you did, and I wish ye had heard every word that has passed between that fair girl and myself this day!"

"Zenie, I beseech you," exclaimed Captain Magruder, "explain this mystery!"

"I have nothing to explain," replied Zenie.

"Are you not my betrothed wife, darling?"

"Faith, that's a plump question, and ought to get a plump answer!" interjected Captain Mike.

"I was your betrothed wife!" answered Zenie, as an expression of agony swept over her lovely face.

"You were my betrothed wife?"

"I was."

"And are you not now?"

"No, Captain Magruder; a letter is already on its way to you through the mail, announcing the dissolution of our engagement."

"And why was that letter sent? Why, without one word of explanation, are the bright hopes of my future dissolved and hidden in the dark veil of a fearful mystery?"

"Let your pride teach you not to ask."

"Faith, Captain Magruder," exclaimed Mike, "if ye do, yer the meekest man that ever lived!"

"Captain Carragher," murmured Zenie, "you would kill me?"

"May Heaven judge between us, darlin', if I am not savin' ye from a fate worse than death!"

## CHAPTER XII.

CAPTAIN MAGRUDER then replied to Zenie's strange asseveration:

"Zenie, my education as a soldier has taught me the service of tactics. I have heard enough to know that you are playing a part! I know that some strange, fatal influence is driving you to appear false to me; you are relying upon that pretension to drive me to fall back upon my pride, so that I will refuse to seek an explanation; but hear me, dearest, not even your own lips can teach me to think you false!"

"By the powers!" ejaculated Captain Mike, rubbing his hands together gleefully, "yer jist plazerizing my argumints, my boy; yer spakin' out like the true man that I know ye to be; and if ye ever become a ginerel, and pintrite the tactics of yer enemy, as ye have the pretty little stratagem of this dear girl, faith ye'll be a second Napoleon!"

"Thank you, Captain Mike; I am glad that you and I, at least, are agreed."

"Agreed, is it? Faith, I'll agree wid any man that swears to the honor and purity of that dear girl; and I'd drive the lie down the throat of the villain that would say there was a false thought in her heart."

"Come, Zenie dearest, cast that shadow from thy brow, and let my perfect love and trust in you dispel the foul shadow which you fancy separates us."

Zenie's face was as rigid as that of a sphinx; wonderful resoluteness of purpose under such a trying ordeal as tested her will would have done credit to a martyr.

Every emotion was suppressed, every sign of agitation banished, under the influence of the one idea that the revelations of Foster Mix made a marriage with him a duty from which there was no escape.

She had become perfectly calm, her manner was cold, and her words deliberately spoken, as she said:

"Captain Magruder, less than two hours ago I stood before the altar, beside Foster Mix, to become his wife."

Frank Magruder started back, and strong, brave man as he was, for an instant it appeared as though he would totter and fall insensible, but by a superhuman effort he preserved a calm demeanor, while faithful old Mike exclaimed:

"That's the end of maneuverin', it's the first shot of the real battle! Now, thin, Captain Magruder, what have ye to say?"

There was a world of tenderness in Frank Magruder's voice, as he answered:

"I am not yet convinced that Zenie is false."

"Spoken like a brave man and a true lover! Now, Zenie darlin', ye'll have to bring on a heavier gun than that, or surrender at discretion."

"To-day the ceremony was interrupted, but I am still determined to marry my cousin Foster Mix."

"What have ye ter say ter that, Captain Frank?"

The young soldier's face became stern, and there was a terrible emphasis in his reply, as he said:

"Foster Mix must first answer to me, and name by what foul lies he won the troth that was mine!"

"Fetch on another gun, Zenie darlin', the last one is spiked."

Zenie's sphinx-like rigidity for an instant was broken by this suggestion, and as over her imagination there quickly flashed the picture of a possible tragedy, she asked, wildly:

"Oh, Frank! Frank! did you ever love me?"

"Did I ever love you?" replied Frank, passionately. "Love you? Ay. Loved you so that that love can never die! My love is a part of my eternity—my love is such that every blade of grass that grew in the turf over your grave would be sacred to me, because your form moldered beneath! My love is such that you can not crush it from my heart, nor can any man born of woman wrest it from me!"

"Can you love me thus, and with that love nurture a desire in your heart to slay the man who is all but my husband?"

"Listen to me, Zenie, and measure well each word that I speak. Had you ceased to love me, and had you given your love to another, I could say, 'Heaven bless you!' and to my rival—'Value that love as I would have valued it!' Even in the far-off I could have loved you with an affection as pure as I might feel for an angel; but when I know that you still love me, and that another has stepped in, and by some foul machination won only the right to call you wife, as the legal form would give it to him; I say nay! I would not give you up to him he must answer to me!"

"But, oh! Frank! Frank! when it becomes my duty to wed another?"

"What? Ask me to sacrifice a love like mine to the mere cold form of duty? Never! I may be cast off, I may have but my unrequited love to gnaw at my heart until it is consumed, but no other man shall take my place, unless you can swear by an oath that shall go upon the records of heaven that you do not love me, and that you do love him!"

"Zenie darlin', if ye can't silence that gun ye had better surrender."

"Oh, Heaven!" cried Zenie, "whence comes my strength to endure this and live?"

"Zenie!" exclaimed Frank Magruder; "let your duty be where your heart is; but listen—I have learned too much now not to learn all. Tell me from what source comes this shadow which has fallen between us?"

"I can not! I can not!"

"Then I must seek the explanation from Foster Mix. If he can give an honorable reason why I should give you up, I will promise to do so, although it breaks my heart! But if he should take you without such an explanation, it will be over my dead body."

So engrossed were the parties, that none of them observed the quiet approach of Foster Mix.

The latter's face was unusually pale, but the same cynical smile rested upon his lips, and his walk was slow and deliberate; he it was who replied to the passionate words of Captain Magruder:

"Foster Mix can give an honorable reason for claiming his cousin as his bride."

"Faith!" muttered Mike, "the devil himself has come to look after his own affairs; but the Lord still reigneth."

It is impossible to describe the effect of her cousin's appearance upon Zenie.

Her very despair appeared to sustain her and prevent her from fainting. And yet, when she would have cried out in alarm, a husky gasp only issued from between her lips.

Captain Mike arose, and going to her, said, tenderly:

"Darlin', let me lead you to the house; acting under a sense of the duty, ye have acted

nobly in persisting in what ye felt was right, but events have carried this matter beyond yer control; let these two gentlemen settle this matter between themselves."

"There will be blood shed," murmured Zenie.

"Divil a dhrop," said Mike; "nathur of thim are common brawlers."

"Cousin!" exclaimed Zenie, addressing Foster Mix, "I pray you return to the house!"

"No, Zenie; my place is here. Captain Magruder is an honorable man—he is entitled to an explanation, and I am the one who ought to afford it."

"And would you break the condition that won from me the promise to become your wife?"

"I will not."

"I know of no other explanation which you can give."

"You have the word of a gentleman and your betrothed husband that the condition to which you allude shall not be broken."

"That is a condition that you can not keep!" said Captain Magruder, as he fastened a fierce glance upon Foster Mix.

"I can promise you a satisfactory explanation," replied the latter, without the quiver of a muscle of his marble face.

"Sir, you have heard that there was but one explanation to make; I have a word for it that I value more than yours; none other will satisfy me."

There is such a thing as a person's being compelled to be satisfied with what they get!"

"I am not one of those persons."

"Come, Zenie darlin', let you and I away to the house," said Captain Mike, tenderly placing his hands about Zenie's waist.

Zenie was a southern girl, and knew from the tone of the conversation that her presence alone would prevent bloodshed, and she firmly refused to leave the scene.

## CHAPTER XIII.

FRANK MAGRUDER and Foster Mix were both gentlemen who had been educated to respect the presence of a lady.

It is not an unusual thing for a man possessed of a cruel, villainous heart, to preserve, in his outward bearing, the manners of a gentleman.

Foster Mix was one of these; he was capable of uttering the most cruel remarks, but in the most graceful manner.

It was evident that the very result Zenie thought to prevent by her presence was also the one that Mike desired to precipitate.

For a full minute an awkward silence followed the last belligerent remarks of the two gentlemen. At length Mike broke the silence by saying:

"Zenie, as a true woman, ye owe an explanation to Captain Frank. That explanation could come from your lips alone, and I would have ye remember that, barrin' all other issues, ye are driving a guest from your house."

An idea appeared to strike Zenie, and she said:

"I must have time to think. To-morrow I will be better prepared to meet the difficulties that have gathered about me."

In his usually calm, deliberate manner, Foster Mix said:

"I recognize your unexpressed wish, and will relieve you of my presence."

With this remark, after bowing coldly to Captain Magruder, Foster Mix turned and deliberately sauntered away.

Not a word was spoken until Foster Mix had passed from sight, when Captain Magruder said:

"I think that I can perceive, Zenie, that you wish to dismiss me also. May I ask at what hour it will be convenient for you to receive me and tell me why I have been thrown overboard for that man?"

"Do ye mean," asked Captain Mike, "that ye consider yerself turned away?"

"I will drive over to the town, and remain until the appointed hour to-morrow."

"Captain Magruder," said Zenie, "I regret the terrible necessity that compels me to accede to your desire to return to town, but I feel that it is better for you and for me that you should do so."

Zenie's manner while speaking was cold, precise, and seemingly heartless. Its effect upon Captain Magruder was remarkable.

A peculiar look of despair settled upon his handsome face, as though the conviction had settled upon his mind that truly there was a



shadow between his beloved and himself which could never be lifted.

He took two or three steps, as though about to depart without another word, when suddenly he turned.

The expression of despair, during that brief moment that his back had been turned, had deepened upon his face; the usual glorious expression of his eyes had been succeeded by a wild glare.

So sorely had he been stricken, that the usual active vigor and grace of his manly form had been blighted by a sudden sorrow in place of years.

Zenie would have cried out. Nervously she raised her hands as though she could clasp them in an agony of despair, and dropping upon her knees, bid him stay; but the recalling word was frozen upon her lips.

The memory of Foster Mix's terrible revelation held her silent; the daughter of Hepsy Doane had nothing remaining but a future of trial and suffering.

Frank Magruder spoke. Even the tones of his voice were sadly changed, as he said:

"Why should I insist upon an explanation? Why should I inflict my presence upon you again? No, this parting shall be final. The secret that you can not willingly reveal to-day, I'll not force from you to-morrow. But, Zenie, listen, and mark well my words! When you hear that the earth has been raised over my dead form, remember that I, dying, never believed you false."

"Dying? You die?" almost screamed Zenie. "Why should you talk of graves and dying?" and the distracted girl clasped her nervously twitching hands as though unconscious of her disposition of them.

"Why should I talk or think of living? Zenie, all the hopes and glory of my future were born upon my love for you. When you stamp upon that love, you crush the germ of every hope that could spring in my heart. A man without hope must die."

"Oh, Frank, Frank, you must not talk thus."

"Are you the one to bid me not to talk thus? Was it not from your lips fell the words that have crushed me?"

"Did I reveal my secret, it would be a more cruel blow."

"No; there is no other blow that I could feel. The fullness of despair and agony is already mine."

"Oh, Heaven!" almost screamed Zenie, "strike me dumb, lest I be persuaded to speak!"

"Faith, darlin'," said Mike, "it's Heaven that's persuadin' ye."

"What shall I do—what shall I do? Oh, be merciful! Do not try me further!"

"Let those ask mercy that show mercy," said Mike. "Darlin', I have kept silent. I didn't believe it was in your heart to resist the impulse of doing that which is right."

"It's to be merciful that I refuse to speak."

"Faith, thin, darlin', I prefer tryin' a little of yer vengeance, if that's what ye call yer mercy."

"Zenie," exclaimed Frank, advancing toward her, "I pray you, not for my sake, but for your own, speak!"

"Ay," cried Mike, "spake it, if it blisters yer lips! But, darlin', it'll only take the soreness out of yer heart."

"Oh, Frank, Frank, I can not bear up any longer!"

"Don't stop to think, darlin'," pleaded Mike. "Out wid it once and forever, amen!"

"It is a long story," said Zenie; "you must come to the house. You shall learn the secret as I learned it, in all its terrible details, with all the fullness of the proof of its truth."

"Come, thin," exclaimed Mike; "it's dark now, but the clouds are already breaking away. Come, Captain Frank—the shadow is rising. Ye and Zenie are drawing near to each other once again. Faith, an' I fale like prancing around like an unchained dog."

The coach had been sent on to the stables long before, while, during this whole exciting scene the party had remained in the same spot where they had first been joined by young Magruder.

With slow steps and serious faces, they proceeded toward the house. As they ascended the steps leading up to the broad piazza, Captain Mike turned, and glancing across the valley, beheld Foster Mix mounted upon his black mare, just crossing the crest of the hill previously alluded to.

"May the devil's wings never tire, whin he

runs away wid you!" said Mike, shaking his fist at the distant horseman.

Zenie led the way into the drawing-room, and requesting her companions to wait, left the room.

In a few moments she returned, bearing in her hands the same manuscript that she had received from Colonel Wingate, the lawyer.

Advancing direct to Captain Magruder, Zenie said:

"Frank, always remember that you insisted upon learning this revelation."

"I know, Zenie, as far as I am concerned, that I will never have one regret for having insisted, as I am personally concerned."

"I must also exact a condition. You and Captain Mike must both promise that this horrible secret shall be held inviolate, and guarded as sacredly as your own honor."

"Am I to read this paper aloud?"

"As you choose. Every word therein written has been imprinted upon my memory in letters of fire."

"Do not leave it to my choice; and further, even now you can recall your decision," and he held the manuscript toward her.

"May I be clubbed wid a salt mackerel if she can recall her decision! Ye can refuse to read it if ye will, Captain Frank, but may I become a friend of Foster Mix if I don't learn every word of it!"

"You need not fear, Captain Mike—I shall not recall my decision. I insist upon Frank reading that paper, and reading it aloud!"

#### CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTAIN MAGRUDER unfolded the manuscript, and ere beginning to read aloud, fastened his eyes upon the following suggestive and startling lines:

"Miss Deane, for I shall still call you by that name, before reading the subjoined thrilling statement of facts, I wish to possibly fasten upon your mind that unless I was satisfied beyond a possible question of doubt, with the proof of sustaining this revelation, I should never have permitted the faintest rumor of its declarations to have reached you; but, as previously written, the proofs are irrefragable that you are not the daughter of General Deane and his wife, but the offspring of a notoriously infamous woman named Hepsy Doane."

It did not take Captain Magruder a fiftieth part of the time to glance over the above words that it required to record them.

Even while he read, the full import of Zenie's terrible secret flashed upon his mind.

At the same instant, he recognized by what means Foster Mix, as the possessor of this terrible revelation, had forced Zenie to promise to become his wife.

How fully Captain Mike had understood the honorable character of young Magruder, was instantly proven by the latter's magnanimous action.

Deliberately folding the manuscript, he advanced toward Zenie, his face beaming with a portion of its old fire and spirit, as he exclaimed:

"Zenie, if this is the shadow that has come between us, that shadow is easily dispelled!"

"You have not mastered the contents of that paper, Frank."

"The first paragraph, darling, reveal all that you are in honor bound to tell me."

"But, begorra, that isn't makin' me the possessor of the secret! But niver mind, Captain Frank, as long as ye are plased, divil a bit care I to know more!"

"I know of no reason, Captain Mike, why, as the old friend of this dear girl, you should not be a partner in the secret. I am satisfied that the disclosure would affect your friendship as little as it has my love."

Upon hearing these words, Zenie's beautiful face became radiant; the look of stolid despair that had rested upon it for the last few days suddenly vanished, and was succeeded by the old expression of love and gladness.

Only for a brief moment was this transformation visible.

Again the cold, hard look came, as she said:

"I appreciate your magnanimity, Frank, but I do not believe that you fully realize the force of the disclosures contained in that paper."

"Knowing that I still possess your pure love, Zenie, there is no disclosure that can affect my love!"

"I am the daughter of Hepsy Doane," and after a moment, as a flush of shame mantled her

cheeks, Zenie added: "That paper states the fact, that in a peculiar sense I am fatherless—my own mother can not name him!"

"Zenie, it is not necessary to prolong this painful scene; neither is it necessary to harrow your feelings. You are pledged to become my wife—I demand that you redeem your pledge!"

"But you forget that this terrible story must become public, and that the finger of scorn will be pointed at your bride!"

"Who would be base enough to give this terrible story to the world?"

"Foster Mix, unless I become his wife!"

"And would you purchase silence at such a price?"

"Yes; for your sake, and for the sake of that invalid woman whom I have always believed to be my mother; she believes me to be her child—this revelation would kill her, or burden her last hours with the bitterest agony!"

"No, Zenie; it would cause her great agony to know that you had been false to me, and purchased silence by becoming the bride of Foster Mix."

"Frank, I appreciate your generosity, and I honor your love; but for my heart-mother's sake, I must make this sacrifice."

"Never, Zenie! I have not loved you because you were the daughter and heiress of General Deane, nor will I lose you because you are really the child of this Hepsy Doane, whoever she may be."

"Spoken like a true man, begorra! This is a proud day for Captain Mike! Let me see Zenie once your bride, and the old man is ready to lay down and die! No truer heart or braver arm could I lave to shield my dead friend's child!"

Zenie could stand the strain no longer. So fearful was her inward emotion, that death or tears was required to save her heart from breaking.

Mercifully the fountain of tears opened, and, burying her face in her hands, she wept.

"Thank Heaven for thim tears!" exclaimed Mike, and then, turning toward young Magruder, he added, "Captain Frank, do ye fully understand the nature of this revelation, and are ye prepared to stand to yer word?"

"A thousand times more determined now than before these facts were revealed to me!"

"Thin ye are prepared to take as yer bride the daughter of Hepsy Doane, without a shillin', and a taint of a disgraceful parentage?"

"I would permit none other but you to ask that question! I repeat, more a thousand times now, I would marry the daughter of Hepsy Doane in preference to the heiress of General Deane."

"Thank Heaven for those words; and now, listen to me: every statement in that paper that ye hould in yer hand is a lie, as false as any ever coined in the depths of hell—every proof of forgery!"

There was something grand in the attitude of the old man, as, with uplifted hands, he gave utterance to this startling declaration.

Captain Magruder did not appear to be much astonished, but Zenie, rushing across the room, placed her two fair hands on Captain Mike's arm, and exclaimed:

"Oh, my second father, do you know what you are saying?"

"Faith, I do, child, well."

"But you are only uttering what your heart prompts—what you want to believe!"

"Am I? Well, I might be excused for that, but I am not such a fool with my experience."

"You do not know the story told in that paper—you have not read the proofs!"

"There yer at fault, darlin'; your dear mother and I have studied over every item therein told during the last six months."

"Oh, heavens! what do I hear? Has this terrible story been revealed to my mother?"

"It was revealed to her, darlin' six months ago."

"By whom?"

"By the lying scoundrel who whispered it in your ear; and, in telling this tale to you, Foster Mix broke as sacred an oath as was ever placed upon record!"

"And does my mother doubt the story, in face of these terrible proofs?"

"Faith, child, she niver belaved it."

"Then Foster Mix was a traitor even before he had succeeded in making a victim of me?"

"A traitor, was it? Faith, he's the divil incarnate!"

"Oh, Frank, Frank!" exclaimed Zenie, "can you forgive me for ever thinking of sacrificing you?"



"Dear girl, I have nothing to forgive."

"It was not for my own sake that I would have purchased the silence of Foster Mix."

"Darling, the shadow has been dispelled. Let not a remnant of his influence dwell upon your soul!"

"Howld on, now! howld on, now!" exclaimed Captain Mike. "I'll take meself off in a few minutes, an' ye shall have an opportunity for a reconciliation in the old-fashioned way, widout the burden of my presence. Faith, I couldn't close me ears but what I'd hear ye kissin', and if I should close me eyes, I'd be peepin' through the lids in spite of meself. No, no, I want to burn out this shadow intirely, and thin I'll be gone!"

Despite Mike's protest, Captain Magruder did throw his arms about Zenie, and pressed one kiss upon her fair brow.

"Howld on, now, I tell you, or I'll keep the secret that I was about givin' ye."

"Have you a secret?" asked Zenie, her lovely face all smiles and blushes.

"Faith, I have, darlin'; and I'm more ready to give mine away than you were yours."

"What is your secret, Captain Mike?"

"Faith, my secret is the proof of the falsity of that foul story that Foster Mix used so well as to almost blight forever the happiness of four hearts!"

## CHAPTER XV.

THE human heart is a wonderful store-house of varied emotions.

So sensitive is the veil which hides its emotional springs, that a word will cause it to shadow a human face in sorrow, or wreath it in smiles.

The proof of this singular capacity of the human heart to leap from the depths of despair to the sunlit crest of humor consists in the fact that the skillful dramatist finds it necessary to follow his heavy situations of tragedy and pathos by the lighter scenes of comedy.

Within the half hour, the countenances of the actors in the real life-scene above described were clouded with anxiety and despair, and yet, in a moment, a few brief words, fitly spoken, had caused the shadows to vanish, and they all could smile—and there was gladness and hope in their smiles.

The one announcement that her mother had heard the terrible story watered into life once again the withered buds of hope in Zenie's heart.

The necessity for her dreadful sacrifice had, by a wonderful spell, been removed.

The anticipations of which the hateful secret of Foster Mix had deprived her were magically restored.

She could love now and be loved.

When faithful Mike so confidentially asserted that he held the proofs to establish the falsity of that terrible story, Zenie and Captain Frank advanced toward him, both eagerly exclaiming:

"Dear, good old friend, produce them."

"If yez will take it aisy, now, I'll give ye the proofs that the God of nature has placed upon record, and that a Heaven-inherited skill has preserved."

"Captain Mike, pray don't try my patience. I could endure the agony of despair better than this hopeful suspense."

"Faith, thin, darlin', you'll have to indure the suspense for the prisent. Captain Frank shall see the wonderful proofs I have first. Go you and sit down there, and wait until the clerk of the court calls ye to testify."

It was the severe trials of the past few days that had developed Zenobia's mature womanly traits; ordinarily she was girlish and playful. As Mike pointed to the divan, and issued the peremptory order for her to go and sit there, she shrugged her shoulders in the most approved manner of a boarding-school miss, and impatiently tapped the floor with her small foot.

"Ah! ye can shrug yer shoulders and stamp yer little feet till ye wear a hole in the carpet, but divil a proof will I show till ye go and sit down as I could ye."

Zenie was well aware of Captain Mike's persistent obstinacy, and at length reluctantly obeyed.

"Now, thin, Captain Frank, if ye'll jist step this way," said Mike, as he moved toward the window.

The young officer followed him, when the old man drew from his pocket a miniature painted upon ivory and incased in gold.

Holding it in a good light, he said:

"There, Captain Frank—open yer eyes wide and look at that!"

Captain Frank did as requested, even to involuntarily opening his eyes wide in astonishment, as he exclaimed:

"Great Heaven! I did not know that Zenie had a sister!"

"Faith, and she niver had."

"Then I would swear that that was a portrait of Zenie—only the eyes are blue."

"Faith, it's eyes like her father Zenie has."

"And yet that picture preserves a wonderful resemblance to her."

"Do ye really think so now?"

"The most casual observer could not fail to observe the resemblance."

"Well, as Zenie niver had a sister, this couldn't very aisy be the portrait of a girl that niver existed, could it?"

"I should say not."

"Well, as it isn't Zenie herself—as she has blue eyes and this has black—who the divil can this picture represint?"

"I am puzzled for an answer."

"Well, you niver saw Hepsy Doane, did ye?"

"I never did. I never knew that such a person existed."

"Ye niver heard a description of her while she was young, did ye?"

"I never did."

"Well, if I should tell ye that this was a portrait of Zenie's mother when she was young, ye would swear that the child couldn't deny her mother, or the mother her child, wouldn't ye?"

A sudden light appeared to break upon Captain Magruder's mind. Catching the picture from the old man's hand, he exclaimed, excitedly:

"By Jove! I begin to penetrate the mystery. The original of that picture, with that pure face, could never have been infamous."

"Divil a purer or nobler woman ever lived!"

"Then there is a mystery, after all, surrounding Zenie's birth, and Foster Mix lies when he proclaims that her mother was an infamous character!"

"Faith, he lies like the very divil."

Zenie had overheard this conversation, and its startling import brought once again the anxious look to her face. Rising from her seat in wild eagerness, she rushed across the room, and sought to seize the miniature from Captain Magruder's hand, but faithful old Mike anticipated her movement, and grasped the picture himself.

"Let me see that miniature," she cried.

"Faith, I could ye, darlin', ye must wait until the clerk of the court calls ye."

"Captain Mike," said young Magruder, "you need not fear to show the picture to Zenie, and I will stake my honor that she has no reason to blush because she is the child of Hepsy Doane. Those painted features are crowned with a look of refinement and purity."

"Yer not as smart as I thought ye was, Captain Frank. Now, I'll show ye that yer future bride is much smarter, or else that the instincts of a child are keener in penetrating a mystery."

Mike handed the miniature to Zenie. The moment the latter's eyes fell upon the pictured face, she exclaimed:

"Oh, Heaven! it is a miniature of my mother! How beautiful she was! I never saw this miniature before."

"What think ye now, darlin', of the fond tale of Foster Mix?"

"I think that he must be a fiend in human form to have coined such a tissue of falsehoods!"

Captain Magruder stood looking on, with a face of astonishment and perplexity; finally he said:

"Then you have seen your mother before, Zenie?"

"Seen my mother?" returned Zenie; "why, what do you mean, Captain Frank?"

"Can't ye see, darlin', what the jackass manes? Bad luck to his thickheadedness, but he supposes that to be the picture of Hepsy Doane!"

"Why, Frank, do you not recognize the picture? It is a miniature of my mother when she was young. Oh, how beautiful she was!" and Zenie pressed the miniature to her lips.

"Have I misunderstood you, Captain Mike?" asked Captain Magruder. "Is not that a portrait of Zenie's mother, Hepsy Doane?"

"Faith, it's a portrait of Zenie's mother; but divil a line of it was iver painted for Hepsy Doane. That is a likeness of General Deane's widow, painted a month previous to her marriage."

"Oh, Frank, Frank, look at it again; sickness and grief have aged my mother, but can't you see the resemblance? Dear, dear mother, thank Heaven that my resemblance to your former self is a sufficient answer to the foul calumnies of a villain!"

"Faith, darlin', ye thought all the time, now, that I was a cruel old monster, didn't ye?"

Zenie rushed, and throwing her arms about the old man's neck, pushed aside the long silver hair, and kissing him upon his cheek and brow, exclaimed:

"You darling, faithful old friend, how could I ever have doubted your kindness? But tell me, why did you and my mother withhold this story from me, and leave me to become the prey—almost the victim—of Foster Mix?"

"Faith, darlin', I'll tell ye why; because your noble old mother, in her tender love for you, was as big a fool as you would have become. 'Tell it to the child,' sez I. 'No, no, 'twill kill her!' sez she; and then we were on the point of destroying each other through yer love; yer mother littin' ye become a victim to kape the secret from ye, and ye becomin' a victim to kape the secret from her. Begorra, 'twas the old man, wid Heaven's help, that saved the both of yez!"

"How blind we were!"

"Faith, I can't gainsay that; but, mind ye, yer mother niver damed of the danger to which ye were exposed. She trusted that yer love for that harum-scarum chap there would prove a sufficient shield against the machinations of your cousin; for, wid shame I own it, darlin', but, really, ye do bear that relationship to the divil!"

"And was my mother trying to suppress this story?"

"Only until she could prove its falsity. Faith, she has one of the greatest detectives in the country, who is at work gradually unraveling the cunningly spun threads of Foster Mix's false and baseless tale."

## CHAPTER XVI.

UPON the following day, Zenie and her betrothed were alone in the drawing-room. Both their countenances were beaming with happiness.

Verily, from their faces it might be judged that the dark shadow which had intervened between them had been dispelled.

Once again they were lovers, indulging all the bright hopes usually vouchsafed at this peculiar period of existence.

They had evidently been engaged in an earnest conversation, which had been brought to a happy conclusion, as betrayed by Captain Magruder's suggestive inquiry:

"Then, dearest, the only obstacle to an immediate marriage is your mother's consent?"

"I can think of no other."

As Zenie made this reply, she glanced up and beheld the eyes of faithful Mike fastened upon her with a humorous gleam in them.

"Well, Captain Mike," asked Zenie, "you have something important to say, I know."

"Faith, all I have to say, Zenie darlin', is, that there's another obstacle galloping this way on a black horse, hang him!"

"Foster Mix?"

"The same; and if ye have no better luck in dismissing him thin ye did Captain Frank here, ye'll be in a sore plight, indade."

"I have nothing but scorn, and contempt, and loathing for Foster Mix!"

"And yet he has your promise," persisted Mike, with provoking assurance.

"That promise was wrung from me while under the spell of his cunning lies."

"I believe ye, darlin', and wid your permission I'll mate him at the door, and suggist to him that his prisence may be more wanted at home thin here."

"No; that man made me suffer too severely for me not to wish to witness his chagrin when he learns that his wickedness is likely to recoil upon himself."

"All right. If ye think ye have the courage and strength to bear the interview, divil a word have I to say again it."

"Would you prefer meeting him alone?" asked Frank Magruder.

"No; I prefer that others should witness the man's humiliation."

Shortly after the foregoing conversation, Foster Mix cantered up before the porch, dismounted, and with his usual deliberate pace ascended the broad steps to the door-way, where



he was met by Captain Mike, who said, with irritating coolness:

"Ye'll find yer fair cousin in the drawing-room wid Captain Frank. Faith, as one of the family, ye'll be pleased to see how happy they are since their reconciliation."

A dark frown settled upon the face of Foster Mix.

He felt a premonition that he was to be baffled, after all, and yet, as he entered the room, his manner was as calm and easy as usual.

For a moment an awkward silence followed his entrance; at length Foster Mix said:

"Zenobia, if I properly understood your words yesterday, I am expecting a decision between that gentleman and myself."

Zenie's manner was as cold and icy as the man's who addressed her, as she replied, in tones of deliberate scorn:

"Foster Mix, your misrepresentations alone permitted the possibility of my having to decide between the man I loved and the man I loathed. I was pledged to one voluntarily; the other wrung pledges from me through falsehoods. I have heard how foully false your revelation was, sir, and dare you still ask for a decision?"

"I still ask for a decision."

"I shall keep the pledges that were prompted by love, and repudiate those which were wrung from me by a lie."

"Shall I order your horse around?" asked Captain Mike, quietly.

The baffled villain flashed a menacing glance upon Mike, but made no reply.

Zenie's concise, expressive words appeared momentarily to confuse him; but his mental poise was such that he quickly recovered his self-possession, and inquired, with seeming carelessness:

"Have you made confidants of those who are interested in denouncing certain revelations as false?"

"I have made confidants of those who know certain revelations to be false."

"Am I to understand that the secret of your birth has been revealed?"

"You are to understand that the false story concerning my birth has been told."

"It has been pronounced false?"

"It has."

"By whom?"

"By those who have the best reason to know."

"Zenie, I would have spared you what I am now forced to say."

"I am past claiming your forbearance."

"You invite, then, further revelations?"

"I can not be terrified by them."

"Your mother lives!"

"A messenger from the city this morning was in advance of you with that revelation."

"I am speaking of Hepsy Doane."

"I have no interest in such a person, even if she exists."

Foster Mix was not speaking now with any hope of gaining his lost influence over Zenie; at least, for the present, he was merely seeking a mean revenge in trying to humiliate her, prompted by the raging anger, mortification, and bitterness concealed under his calm demeanor.

His wonderful control alone enabled him to suppress the raging fire of passion, and forbear upbraiding her in the most violent manner; at length he said:

"Captain Magruder may have glamourised over the disgrace which attaches to you—"

Foster Mix had proceeded thus far, when he was interrupted by Captain Magruder, who exclaimed, fiercely:

"Be careful, sir, how you address the lady who is my affianced wife!"

A bland smile wreathed Foster Mix's thin lips, as he replied, gently:

"Your pardon, sir, but remember, I am addressing a relative; and more—a ward, whom the law still recognizes as subject to my control!"

"If you are to accept your own story, sir, Miss Deane is not a relative of yours; if she was not the daughter of General Deane, the clause in his will which made you her guardian is void."

"Faith! the captain's practicing gunnery again," said Mike. "That was a whole battery that he fired off that time."

Foster Mix saw that he had been matched; the bland smile faded from his lips, and a dangerous light gleamed in his steely eyes, as he replied, insultingly:

"Under any circumstances, your interference, sir, is presumptuous."

"I presume, sir, only to interfere so far as to

guard this lady from the insults which I am compelled to pass, when heaped upon myself, because of her presence."

"If you prefer it, Captain Magruder, I will address an inquiry pertinent under the circumstances to you."

"I am ready to listen, sir."

"Have you considered the legal status of Miss Deane since the announcement of the revelation that you have taught her to disbelieve?"

"You will please confine yourself to statements which you know to be true."

"Wherein do we differ on facts?"

"When you say that I taught Miss Deane to disbelieve your forged story."

Foster Mix paid no attention to the meaning implied in the word forged. He was dead set in a purpose, and in order to carry out that purpose, was prepared to control his temper, and he said:

"I will withdraw that statement and repeat the question: Have you fully considered Miss Deane's present legal status under the will of the late general?"

"Such a consideration is my affair alone."

"You are a younger man than I am, but permit me to tell you that, despite your present assurance, the truth of my allegations will be established in a court of law."

## CHAPTER XVII.

CAPTAIN MIKE had whispered a few words in the ears of Zenie that caused the latter to withdraw from the room, leaving the three men alone.

Zenie had only consented to do so under the belief that no violence would occur while the gentlemen were inmates of the house.

As Zenie turned to leave the room, Foster Mix had bid her to remain, when Captain Magruder advanced and escorted her to a door leading into the hall.

When the latter returned, he said:

"Now, sir, that you are denied the privilege of harrowing the feelings of a defenseless woman, you can spit out your venom, hiss like the snake in the grass, or bark like the cur that you are!"

"You are a liar! a villain! and a scoundrel!" exclaimed Foster Mix, fiercely.

Captain Magruder was but a mere youth, fiery and impetuous, and thrown into a passion by those epithets, in the excitement of the moment, he forgot where he was.

His hand flew to his pistol-pocket, and with his form trembling with passion, and his eyes blazing with fierce wrath, he exclaimed:

"Draw, you whelp!"

"Fire, if you choose," replied Foster Mix, without flinching, and calmly folding his arms,

"I have no weapon."

"You have come here unarmed?"

"I have."

"Then you came unarmed, in the presence of gentlemen, like the coward that you are, to save your life."

"No; I came unarmed because I was a gentleman—too much of a gentleman to invite violence in a house where I was a guest."

There was a stinging rebuke in these words, albeit they came from a man who was at heart such a villain as Foster Mix.

Captain Magruder felt the rebuke, and restoring the weapon to his pocket, said:

"Our quarrel can be adjourned; but remember that I shall hold you responsible for your language."

"You prove yourself but a boy," said Foster Mix, with a sneer, "when you even suggest that your own language could be permitted to pass unpunished."

Without another word Foster Mix turned upon his heel and left the room and the house, and a moment later might have been seen galloping away on his coal-black steed.

"Well, Captain Frank," exclaimed faithful Mike, "that devil got a thrifle the best of ye on the last few shots."

That same night, after a long talk with Zenie, Captain Magruder announced his intention of riding to the city.

Faithful Mike met him passing through the hall, and upon learning his purport, exclaimed:

"Why the devil don't ye wait till mornin'?"

"My leave of absence expires in forty-eight hours."

"Well, what of that?"

"I wish to be back here by to-morrow noon, if possible."

"Ah!" exclaimed Captain Mike, as he drew

the lids half down over his handsome blue eyes, and smiled roguishly.

"Is it a license ye're goin' for?"

"It's possible, my old friend, that you may be called upon to act as 'best man' before to-morrow's sunset."

"All right, me b'y; there was a time when I would have taken a night ride on the same errand; and, begorra! I have something to say ter ye. I'll ride along wid ye till the crest of the hill."

A few moments later both men were in the saddle, and shortly after were riding briskly through the valley road.

Three quarters of an hour after Captain Magruder and his companion had driven away from the house, a farmer and his son met the latter galloping back toward the Deane mansion.

The old Irishman's peculiar dress and long hair made him a special mark for future identification, even by parties who might catch a momentary glance of him.

The farmer and his son were accompanied by a couple of dogs, and as they passed over the crest of the hill and were descending upon the opposite side, the attention of the men was attracted by a peculiar howl.

"Father, what's that?" exclaimed the son, halting, and clutching his father's arm nervously, as the doleful sound fell upon his ear.

The father's face almost became pale as he replied:

"Boy, that's the death howl of a dog, as sure as you're alive."

"Let's take the path under the hill, father," said the boy.

"No, no, John, we must find out what the howling of that dog means."

Even while the farmer and his son stood halting, one of the dogs came back and whined in a doleful manner, running a short distance away, and then returning, as dogs have frequently been known to do, when anxious to draw their masters to a particular spot.

"Stay here, boy," said the old farmer, "and I will go and see what the beasts have found."

"No, no, do not leave me alone; let's take the path under the hill; we can come over in the morning and see what is the matter."

"Boy," said the old man, sternly, "either remain here or follow me, just as you choose. A fellow-being may have met with an accident, or may be in distress."

The old man was but an ignorant individual, and was imbued with the superstitious fears that distinguish many of the uneducated.

The mournful howl of the dog had filled him with terror; and yet, ordinarily, he was a courageous man, and despite his superstitious fears he resolutely advanced along the road, determined to discover the cause of the peculiar actions of the dog.

He had proceeded little more than a hundred yards, when he beheld one of the intelligent animals crouched before a dark object which lay in the center of the road.

He quickened his pace, and upon reaching the spot, discovered that the object which the dog was watching was only a soft felt hat.

The farmer reached down and picked it up; and as he raised and examined it closely, a cold chill ran over his strong frame upon discovering that the hat was covered with fresh blood.

"Great heavens!" he muttered between his chattering teeth, "there's been murder done here!"

The farmer's son came sneaking up, when the former held the hat toward the boy, and said:

"See, lad, it's bespattered with blood!"

"It's a soldier's hat, father," whimpered the boy, pointing to a gilt cord that circled the crown.

"By heavens, you're right, lad! And now I remember that young Captain Magruder has been a guest at the Deane's for the last few days."

"What think ye, father?"

"What do I think, boy? Why, I think that there's been a murder committed here."

"If there's been a man murdered, father, where's the body?"

"You're right, boy," replied the old man, and he commenced to search around for the mangled form of the owner of the hat.

Half an hour was spent, and nothing rewarded the search, until at length the boy exclaimed, as he pointed to a dark streak upon the dusty road leading toward the brush:

"See, see, father! The murderers have carried off the body, for here's a trail of blood!"



## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE old farmer dashed through the bushes, and scrambled for some distance down the side of the hill, but, in the darkness, was unable to discover anything. Returning to the road, he said:

"We must carry this hat to the house."

"Don't go there, father," said the boy.

"Why not?"

"Don't you remember that we met that old Irishman, Captain Mike, galloping away from this spot like mad?"

"Well, supposing we did?"

"Oh, father, I hardly dare think of it!"

"Think of what, boy?"

"That he was the murderer."

"Who?"

"Why, that old man we saw galloping away from here."

"See here, boy, keep your words close together, and tell nothing until you are compelled to. If there has been a murder done here, I'll wager my life that Captain Carragher is guiltless of the crime."

"But, father, why was he galloping away, then? This is fresh blood. If the old man did not have a hand in the crime, he must, at least, have discovered that something dreadful had occurred. Then, why did he gallop away without giving any alarm?"

"Hark ye, boy, neither you nor I heard any signs of a struggle."

"But, father, that old man must have ridden right over this spot, if he was not present when the tragedy occurred."

"In the darkness one might have galloped over this spot a dozen times without discovering what was found by the dogs. Hark ye, boy! do ye return home, and if you mention one word of to-night's horrible discovery until I bid ye, I'll flay ye alive!"

"Am I not to tell it at the house?"

"Not to a living soul; and, see here, if I am not home to-night, you can tell your mother I had business at the Deane mansion, and that I stayed there for the night."

The father and son separated; the latter proceeded on toward his home, while the former, carrying the bloody hat with him, faced about, and proceeded on toward the stately home of the Deanes.

As the old farmer tramped along under the starlight, he gave utterance to the thoughts that were passing through his mind.

"It's strange," he muttered, "that I should have met that old man galloping away from that spot, so shortly after the possible committal, by some one, of a fearful murder. And yet it would take stronger evidence to make me believe that that kind-hearted old man, who has been such a good friend to the poor around these parts, could be guilty of any crime, let alone murder!"

The old farmer, who was the employer of several field-hands, was a man of sterling integrity and solid common sense.

As he came in sight of the Deane mansion, the thought struck him that he might occasion an unnecessary shock to the inmates by exhibiting the bloody hat before making some inquiry.

"If it should prove to be a mistake," soliloquized the farmer, "I might cause considerable mischief. I'll make a few inquiries first."

The night was rather warm, and as the farmer arrived at the broad steps, frequently mentioned, leading up to the broad portico, he saw sitting just within the door-way, under the light of a swinging-lamp suspended from the hall ceiling, the girl Janie.

The man was well known to her, and under ordinary circumstances his presence would not have excited any surprise, but the moment he came under the glare of the light, she suspected, from the pallor of his face, that he was the bearer of some startling intelligence.

The farmer was also well acquainted with Janie, and after glancing about a moment, to see that no one else was within hearing, he asked:

"Janie, has young Captain Magruder been a guest here lately?"

"He has, Mr. Stedman. Why do you ask?"

"Is he here at present?"

"No; he has gone to the city."

"When do you expect him back?"

"By to-morrow noon, I think, from what I overheard my young mistress say."

"When did he leave here, Janie?"

"Early this evening."

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated the farmer, displaying considerable agitation.

"What has happened, Mr. Stedman?" asked Janie, in a low, nervous tone, upon observing the farmer's agitation.

"I don't know as anything has happened, Janie."

"Then why are ye making such particular inquiries about the movements of the young captain?"

"Well—well"—repeated the farmer, hesitatingly, "I—was thinking I might have some business with him. When he left here to-night, did he go afoot?"

"No; he was on horseback."

"Did he leave alone, or did any one ride with him?"

"Captain Carragher started away with him."

"Great Heaven!" cried the farmer, involuntarily, adding, as though speaking to himself, "and I met the old man galloping away from the spot like mad."

"See here, Mr. Stedman," in a low, excited voice said Janie, as she advanced her pale face close to the farmer's, "if ye have anything to tell, why don't ye out with it at once?"

"I don't know as I have anything to tell, girl, and yet I fear an accident may have happened."

"Merciful heavens, sir; ye don't mean to the captain?"

The farmer, while speaking to Janie, had held one hand behind him. Slowly he drew it away, and holding forth the hat with the gilt cord circling the crown, asked, in a husky voice:

"Don't scream, girl, but answer me: is that the hat Captain Magruder wore when he left this house early this evening?"

Trembling from head to foot, Janie glanced at the hat, and answered: "It is;" and the next moment, beholding how it was smeared, she exclaimed, wildly:

"Oh, murder! murder! but there's blood on it!"

"Are you sure that is the captain's hat?"

"I am sure! Oh, tell me how came that blood upon it?"

"That I can not tell you, girl."

"How came you to have the hat?"

"I found it upon the road."

"Where?"

"Just over the crest of the hill."

"And was the blood upon it when you found it?"

"It was."

"Oh, my God!" muttered the girl, "what terrible thing has happened?"

"I fear, girl, there has been murder committed!"

"Oh, no, do not say that; he must have fallen from his horse."

"Then why did I only find the hat?"

"Did you look about for the captain?"

"I examined every foot of ground, in every direction, for a hundred yards around."

"And it was just beyond the point of the hill ye found the hat?"

"It was."

"Faith, then, Captain Mike had just parted from him alive and well upon the crest of the hill."

"How do you know that Captain Mike left him alive and well?" asked the farmer, in a strange, peculiar voice.

"Faith, didn't I hear him tell the young mistress so the moment he returned?"

"How did Captain Carragher act when he came back?"

"Full of good nature and good humor, as usual."

"There is some mystery about all this," muttered the farmer.

So absorbed was the farmer and the girl in the startling interest of their conversation concerning the probabilities connected with the mystery attached to that blood-bespattered hat, that neither of them observed the approach of a third party, and both were thrilled with horror upon hearing a startled cry.

Both turned and recognized Zenie.

"Oh, mercy!" moaned Janie, as she recognized her young mistress, with a face pale as marble, and glaring with a stare of horror at the blood-smeared article in the farmer's hands.

The latter sought to hide it behind him, but with an impatient gesture, Zenie motioned to him to bring it nearer under the light.

With a countenance as ghastly as Zenie's, the farmer obeyed.

"Whose hat is that?" gasped the beautiful girl.

"I fear, miss, that it may belong to Captain Magruder."

"Why have you brought it here?"

"I found it upon the road."

Zenie advanced and seized the hat; as she did so, her hand was dampened by the fresh blood.

Clasping it in both hands, she held it before her eyes; her arms were extended to their full length, and as she gazed, her eyes appeared to be starting from their sockets, while every muscle appeared to become suddenly rigid.

Not a word fell from her lips, but, as though fascinated by the fearful blood-stains, she gazed and gazed, until finally, in thick tones, she muttered:

"It's blood! blood!" and before a saving arm could be reached forth, she fell backward like a log upon the floor.

Scream after scream issued from Janie's lips, as in a wild frenzy she threw herself upon the form of her insensible mistress, exclaiming:

"She's dead! she's dead!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

JANIE's screams rang out upon the still night air.

With scared faces and chattering teeth the servants gathered around, and stood with awe-stricken faces gazing upon the scene.

Presently through the hall there came a rapid step, and a moment later, Captain Mike, with his silver hair streaming down upon his shoulders, broke through the crowd of menials, and stood beside the prostrate forms of the two women; for Janie also had fallen unconscious beside her young mistress.

The old Irishman was a man of action. One glance at the rigid features of Zenie convinced him that it was not death that held her features pale and rigid, but a momentary insensibility alone.

There was the sternness of an old commander in his voice, as Captain Mike fastened his flashing eyes upon the farmer, and asked:

"What intelligence did ye bring here? Faith, it must have been some cruel story to have stricken my darlin' thus!"

Silently the farmer pointed to the bloody hat still clinched in Zenie's rigid fingers.

"No pantomime, ef yer please," thundered Mike; "spake out, man."

"Examine that hat," replied the farmer, "and you'll be as far into the mystery as I am."

Captain Mike knelt down, and with difficulty withdrew the hat from Zenie's unconscious grasp, when, as he unfolded it, he exclaimed, in tones of terrible excitement:

"By the powers! what does this mane? It's Captain Frank's hat! and, as I live, it's stained with blood! Who brought this here?"

"I did," said the farmer.

"Where found ye it? and how came it stained with blood?"

In a few concise words the farmer told his story. At its conclusion, Mike exclaimed:

"By the powers! from what ye say, man, ye must have found this hat less than two hundred yards from the spot where I parted from its owner, alive and well."

"I found it about two hundred yards upon the other side of the hill."

"And was this all ye found?"

"That was all."

"Did ye discover no signs of a struggle, or marks of blood besides the stains upon this hat?"

"I did find marks of blood upon the road."

"Woe is me! woe is me!" murmured Mike, as his chin fell upon his breast.

"After you left the captain," asked the farmer, "did you not hear any signs of a struggle?"

"Did I hear any signs of a struggle? Man, do ye think if I had that I would have galloped away from the spot? No, no; had there been a hundred assassins, I would have been by Captain Frank's side in a minute, had I known he was in danger."

"Have you the least idea who could have waylaid him?"

"Faith, if Captain Frank has been murdered, I'll lay my life that I can lay my hand upon his murderer."

Under the manipulation of her old black nurse, Zenie began to exhibit signs of returning consciousness.

"Take that dear girl to her room," said Mike, "and don't lave her for a moment."

"Nebber fear, Massa Mike, ole Aunt Lucy



gwine ter nurse de chile—habbent I allus done so since she were a wee little baby?"

"When she returns to consciousness ye'll just tell her that I'm gone to investigate this matter; that I'm thinking Captain Frank has only had a fall from his horse, and I'll have him back for to nurse in a jiffy."

"Oh, dear me! oh, dear me!" muttered Mike, as he turned away; "but I fear it's little nursing that he'll need in this world! but it's nather food nor slape I'll take till I've run his murderer to earth!"

"What are you going to do, Captain Mike?" asked Farmer Stedman.

"What am I going to do, is it? Faith, I'm going to the spot where ye found this hat! and, sir, put a baste on the murder's tracks that was niver known to lose a scent yet. Stand you here, Mr. Stedman," added Mike, "till I return."

Mike went away, but after a few minutes reappeared.

Two fleet-footed negroes were ordered to procure lanterns, when the old Irishman bade Farmer Stedman to follow him, and proceeded toward the stables.

"Are you going to commence the pursuit mounted?" asked Farmer Stedman.

"By the powers, no, sir! The assassins were a-foot, and immediately after the attack must have taken to the brush, and, begorra! they have their tracks very well covered if I don't run them down before the morrow's sunlight."

Less than fifteen minutes after the first appearance of Captain Mike, the latter, leading the powerful blood-hound previously described, and followed by Farmer Stedman and two negroes carrying lanterns, was proceeding rapidly along the road toward the spot where the blood-stained hat had been found.

As they moved rapidly along, the farmer remarked:

"It's strange that I could find no signs of the captain's body."

"Beggorra! man, I take encouragement from that; had they killed him outright, they would most likely have left him weltering in his blood."

"It's possible that they may have carried off the body!"

"Faith! but we'll soon know."

"Do you know of any one who had a grudge against the young captain—or was it possible that he was murdered for plunder?"

"Faith! there was one that well wished him dead!"

The party had now reached the crest of the hill, when Captain Mike said:

"The moment I let go the hound, yez will stand still and not spake a word on yer lives! Now, then," he added, after a moment, "it's just beyant there where ye found the hat?"

"Right opposite that bare rock."

Mike unleashed the hound, and, as the beast sprang forward, followed slowly.

The hound proceeded directly, with his nose to the ground, until he reached the spot where the farmer's son had discovered the trail of blood.

For a moment the beast sniffed around, and then, with a fierce bark, bounded through the brush.

## CHAPTER XX.

As the hound reached the spot where the hat had been found, and began to sniff around, Captain Mike brought the party to a halt, and with an expression of agonized anxiety leaned his head forward and listened.

Presently he heard the hound's sharp, quick bark.

"Heaven be praised!" he exclaimed, as an expression of joy broke over his countenance.

"What have you learned?" asked the farmer, quickly.

"What have I learned?" ejaculated Mike.

"Yes."

"Faith, I've learned that Captain Frank is still livin'."

"How have you ascertained that?"

"Didn't ye hear the dog?"

"Yes; I heard him bark."

"Faith, thin, mind this: had that hound been upon the track of the dead, ye would have heard a howl that would have frozen the blood in yer veins!"

"Then you think that the captain has not been murdered?"

"Faith, he may have been murdered ere this, but there is one thing sure, he was carried from this spot while living!"

During the latter part of this conversation, Mike had been moving toward the spot where the hound had burst through the brush.

"Now, then, friend Stedman," he said, addressing the farmer, "it's at your own option whether ye follow upon this trail or not."

"I don't know why I should desert you."

"Nor I, either, sure, only that there may be a little warm work afore mornin'!"

"You mean in case we overtake the assassins?"

"I mean that exactly!"

"Well, I'd have ye to know, Captain Mike, I was in many a scrimmage when a young man, and I think I could hold my own now if the worst comes to worst!"

"Yer not armed."

"I can soon cut me a sapling that will serve me well."

"It's a shillalah you mean. Well, it's many a ruction I went through with the same when but a broth of a boy in the Old Dart; but it's these I've become accustomed to since I went sogerin'!" and, as Mike spoke, he produced a pair of revolvers, and examined them critically.

A thorough examination was made of the ground. Captain Mike came to the conclusion that young Magruder had been shot from the thicket while riding along, unconscious of any danger.

His supposition was further, that, after having been shot, he had been dragged from the saddle, and, while the horse had dashed ahead, the ill-fated rider had been dragged away through the brush.

"We'll follow the hound now!" said Mike, and he and his companion moved swiftly in the same direction taken by the dog.

"We've delayed so long, I'm afraid we'll lose track of the dog," remarked Farmer Stedman.

"Never fear," replied Mike, "that hound knows his business too well. Ye'll hear his deep bay pretty soon. Faith, ye'd heard it afore this, only he's not far away!"

As a singular confirmation of Mike's thorough knowledge of the intelligence of the dog, even as he ceased speaking the deep bay of the hound was heard.

"Beggorra! he has the scint yet," exclaimed Mike, "and now all that we have to do is to keep straight ahead."

Under the starlight, through wood and field, and over hedge and brook, the faithful Irishman and his party kept under way, occasionally warned of the proper direction by a signal from the hound.

Thus for two hours they had been upon the trail, and Farmer Stedman had just remarked that they must be nearing the river, when a sound was heard that chilled their hearts and caused their blood to run cold.

It was the mournful death-howl of the hound!

"Did you hear that?" asked the farmer, in terrified tones.

"Did I hear it?" answered Mike, solemnly.

"Faith, I've been waiting for that since first we started."

The party now moved on more cautiously, and shortly after arriving at the brow of the hill came in view of the river gliding smoothly along through the meadow before them.

"Look out now," said Mike, "and mind, can ye see, ye that have better eyes than an old man like me, any signs of human beings moving along the banks of the river?"

While the party were straining their eyes to discover some indications of the murderers, a movement was noticed in the tall grass lining the bank of the river.

"Dar am somebody movin' ober dar," suddenly exclaimed one of the negroes, pointing toward the spot where the movement was seen in the long grass.

"Hide your lanterns, and lay low," exclaimed Mike, in quick tones of command.

The party quickly obeyed the old Irishman's orders, and full five minutes passed of anxious waiting for developments.

At length a sound of heavy breathing was heard, when Captain Mike said:

"Here comes the dog."

True enough, an instant later the hound came stealing forward, and crouching at his master's feet, whined piteously.

"Woe is me! woe is me!" murmured the old Irishman, in heart-broken tones; "there's no mistake in what that baste is trying to tell me. 'Come and look at the dead,' he's saying plain enough."

"May be de murderers am dar, too, Massa Mike," suggested one of the negroes, his eyes dilated with terror.

"Go you and ment in the long plied Mike."

The negro woods to the waving sedge.

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"Can't Mike."

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through the grass before, and at once he gave a signal to the dog.

With a quick bark the latter bounded away, followed by his master and the others.

It was but two hundred yards to the bank of the river, and soon the dog halted, and again the death-howl fell upon their ears.

When within a dozen yards of the spot, Captain Mike came to a halt, and said, in mournful tones:

"Go on ye with the lanterns, ye'll find it there."

"Find what?" asked Farmer Stedman.

"The body of poor Frank Magruder."

The farmer moved ahead, but the two negroes with the lanterns held back.

Seeing that the negroes hesitated, the farmer turned about, and called:

"Bear a hand here with the lanterns."

"Can't go dar, Massa Stedman."

With an impatient remark, the farmer stepped back, and grasping one of the lanterns, advanced alone.

In a moment or two he returned, and by the glimmering light of the lantern Captain Mike saw that the farmer's face was horror-stricken.

"What have ye found?" asked Captain Mike, in a husky voice.

"A dead body."

"I knew it! I knew it! Woe is me! woe is me!"

"The body is lying upon its face," said the farmer, in trembling tones.

"What of that?" asked Captain Mike, quickly.

"I didn't see the face; and there's something else very strange."

"Speak, man; what have ye to tell?"

"The body has a cap on it."

"What?" almost screamed Mike.

"And it's clad in common clothes."

"Here, give me a lantern!" exclaimed Mike.

"Here am I, an old soldier, who has seen dead bodies by the hundreds, trembling here in the princely of one, like a young maid before a nigger wid a sheet over him."

Two or three strides brought Captain Mike beside the body.

"Turn it over," he said to the farmer, who had followed him.

The farmer obeyed, when Captain Mike raised his lantern, and flashed its rays upon the ghastly features of the corpse.

## CHAPTER XXI.

"THANK God!" exclaimed Mike, as he gazed upon the stark and livid face.

"It's the body of a nigger," exclaimed the farmer.

"Troth, it's not the body of Captain Frank; and divil a bit do I care whose it is, as long as it's not his; but see here!"

As Mike spoke, he swung his lantern round, and pointed to a number of footprints in the soft clay on the river bank.

"There's been a number of men here," said the farmer, in a low tone.

"Ay! and there's been some shootin' goin' on, too;" and Mike pointed to the bark of a sapling evidently chipped by a bullet.

"There's been a boat here," said the farmer; "and here's where they shoved off," he added, pointing to a smoothed surface, evidently made by the bottom of a flat-boat as it was slid off the bank.

"Beggorra!" exclaimed Mike, "but Captain Frank had plenty of life in him when he was able to lay out that scoundrel over there."

"What are we to do now?" asked the farmer.

"That's just what I'm revolv'ing in my own brain. Faith, if they had the boat, they have kept to the wather, and that throws the hound from the scint."

"All I see that we can do is to place the matter in the hands of the district attorney, and put the authorities on the track."

"Faith, we'll do that; but it's niver a full night's rest that I'll take until Captain Frank is found, dead or alive!"

It was long after sunrise when Captain Mike and the two negroes reached home.



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er in the city.

The arguments which he advanced for this course finally prevailed.

Within two hours after Captain Mike's return, Zenie was on her way to the city to join her mother.

Three days passed. During that time the county attorney had been put in possession of all the facts, a reward had been offered, and two detectives from Cincinnati had been telegraphed for to come and work up the mystery.

During this time Captain Mike had been on the go day and night, working out his own theory for the unraveling of the mystery.

The strange story had gone abroad. Relatives of the missing captain had come from Virginia, and enormous sums of money were offered. Every clue was followed—but the days lengthened into weeks, and the weeks into months, and still it remained a mystery.

Suspicion had been directed even toward the brave old Captain Mike. He was put under arrest, and might have languished in prison for months, had not an unexpected circumstance arisen which established his innocence, but threw a greater shadow over the mystery.

Two gentlemen, well known in the county, came forward and testified that they had met Captain Magruder riding on alone, at least a quarter of a mile from the spot where the bloody hat was found.

Still another fact which added to the mystery was the remarkable circumstance that the captain's horse was never discovered, either dead or alive.

Another story now came upon the wings of rumor.

The startling romance was passed from mouth to mouth that Zenobia Deane, the beautiful and wealthy heiress, was not, after all, the real daughter of the late general, but the child of an infamous woman named Hepsy Doane.

There was a circumstantiality of detail connected with these stories that carried the evidence of their truth to the masses.

Three persons prominently connected with these terrible rumors well knew their source, and the clear method of the details did not surprise them.

These latter stories not only solved the question in the minds of the county law officers, but of the public generally. The accepted conclusion was that Captain Frank Magruder, upon discovering that his intended bride was not only no heiress, but the offspring of infamy and shame, had been accessory to a little pretended tragedy which would convey the impression that he had been murdered, when, in reality, he had ridden away incognito, for the purpose of avoiding the consequences of an alliance that would be shadowed by such a tale of infamy resting over the origin of the bride.

The immediate friends of Mrs. Deane and her daughter gave no credence to these wild stories. The same proofs that had convinced Captain Magruder of their falsity were sufficient for the friends and relations of the honored widow and her beautiful child.

Our readers must not suppose that these terrible tales were permitted to pass without contradiction; but every-day experience proves the fact that a defamation of this kind, in the mouths of the multitude, will at least for a season overshadow the true facts.

It was a terrible affliction, but it was resolutely met, although it required time to establish the truth, and dispel the foul odor of common rumor.

Two months subsequent to the mysterious disappearance of Captain Magruder, four persons, well known to our readers, were holding a consultation in the drawing-room of the Deane mansion.

"And do you still cling to the same opinion," asked a tall lady, whom we will introduce as Mrs. Deane, "that Captain Frank was really a party to this mystery?"

"I would prefer, madame, in view of the unshaken confidence that you and your daughter and our old friend here retain in the integrity of Captain Magruder, not to express an opinion."

Zenie, whom trials had made more spiritually beautiful, now spoke up, and said:

"Colonel Wingate, you are my mother's legal adviser, and in expressing your conviction, you must be governed by your experience as a lawyer, without regard to the beliefs and confidences prompted by our hearts."

"Spoken up like a brave daughter of old Kentucky!" exclaimed Mike; "and, believe me, my old heart keeps me firm in the belief that ye'll yet be rewarded for yer faith, by beholding Captain Frank again in life, and as true and honorable as upon that evil day when he left these doors!"

"I hope," said Colonel Wingate, "that your hearts will prove better indexes of the final dénouement than the law of evidence."

"Then you really believe, colonel, that Captain Magruder is alive, and was a party to the establishment of the mystery attached to his disappearance?"

"As I am compelled to speak, I must say, my dear madame, that circumstances point directly to such a conclusion."

"See here, Colonel Wingate, it's not more than three months ago that ye looked upon the proofs furnished by Foster Mix as legally satisfactory concerning the parentage of that dear girl."

"Had you and Mrs. Deane consulted me, as you ought to have done, instead of relying upon detectives, I might have been better prepared to meet that man's revelation."

"Well, there's one thing, colonel," exclaimed Mike, suddenly, "see that this time ye be better prepared, for here comes Foster Mix, as usual, mounted on a black horse—the devil!"

## CHAPTER XXII.

"ZENIE," said Mrs. Deane, upon hearing Mike's announcement, "I desire that you withdraw; it is not necessary that you should meet this man."

There was a light in Zenie's eye, and an expression upon her face which plainly indicated that, had she consulted her own wishes alone, she would have preferred to meet Foster Mix face to face; but accustomed always to yield to the judgment of her mother, she left the room.

A few moments later Foster Mix cantered up to the entrance of the house, halted, and dismounted in the same deliberate manner as formerly.

An observer would not have judged, from his manner, that there had been any interruption to his former intimate relations with the family of the mansion.

His usual signal brought the colored boy around to take charge of his horse, when, with the same cold smile upon his face, and quiet, self-possessed bearing, he ascended to the broad piazza, entered the house, and was shown into the presence of Mrs. Deane, Captain Mike, and the lawyer.

After the exchange of the usual salutations, Mrs. Deane abruptly opened the subject which had led to his presence.

Addressing Foster Mix, she said:

"Foster, when you received my message to visit Deane Hill, you must have surmised the purpose of my desire to see you?"

"My dear aunt," replied Foster Mix, in perfectly even tones, "I did no such thing."

"You have certainly heard the terrible story which has floated upon public rumor concerning my daughter?"

"I certainly have."

"I will not charge you with having furnished the original material for these rumors."

"You would do me an injustice if you did."

"And yet, Foster, their origin has been traced to you; still the truth or falsity of that suspicion is immaterial."

"The suspicion is wrong and unjust."

"For the present, I will accept your denial. As it leads me to premise that you are equally concerned with other friends and relatives in proving that the whole story is an absolute forgery?"

"If I believed it to be an absolute forgery, I certainly should feel myself called upon to prove it so."

"I am glad to hear you say so, as you can greatly assist us in running down the lie to the foul source from whence it originated."

"If I was once convinced that it was a lie, you certainly could count upon my aid."

"I have summoned you here to prove to you that the story is absolutely false. I indulge the hope that you have merely been imposed upon,

as others have, and that you will gladly recognize the absolute proof which I possess."

"I thank you, aunt, for your confidence, and I assure you that I am prepared to have my impressions concerning this story removed."

After Foster Mix had thus expressed himself, Mrs. Deane advanced toward him, handing him a miniature portrait, and said:

"Will you please look at that?"

Foster Mix took the picture, and after fastening his cold eyes upon it a moment, said, without betraying the least symptoms of excitement:

"This is a picture of yourself, aunt?"

"Yes—and I believe you never saw it before."

"I never did."

"That miniature was mislaid and lost for twenty years. It was accidentally found a few months ago. As you gaze at it, Foster, does it not strike you that its discovery was fortunate—even providential?"

"Fortunate, I should say, but I am not tinged with that superstition that teaches one to look upon the most ordinary events as providential."

"Does not a startling fact strike you upon beholding that miniature?"

"I only recognize the fact, dear aunt, of how beautiful you were."

Mrs. Deane betrayed considerable excitement, and the tones of her voice were tremulous, as she asked, eagerly:

"Do you not detect a startling resemblance to your cousin in that picture?"

"To what cousin have you reference, dear aunt?" replied Foster Mix, in a tone of indifference that was freezing.

"A resemblance to my daughter."

"You mean Zenie?"

"Yes."

"Well, since you call my attention to it, I must admit that I do recognize a slight resemblance."

"And what conclusion do you draw from that fact?"

"Simply that it is a remarkable coincidence."

"Do you not recognize that nature and art proclaim the story of Hepsy Doane to be an infamous lie?"

"I certainly do not. Is this the proof—the only proof that you have to furnish?"

"Is not that sufficient?"

"The simple fact of an accidental resemblance is not sufficient to lead me to pronounce this story of Hepsy Doane a forgery."

"Then you still believe that story to be true?"

"I must, until stronger proofs are brought to deny it than have already been advanced to support it."

"The resemblance between that picture and my daughter does not make the least impression upon you?"

"Not the least, as far as the story of Hepsy Doane is concerned."

"Then you would not feel justified in aiding us in establishing the fact of its being a forgery?"

"I could not conscientiously aid in supporting a false theory that would continue the offspring of an infamous woman as the recognized heiress of the honored name and estate of my mother's brother."

Mrs. Deane, although an invalid, appeared to be supplied momentarily with extraordinary physical strength, as drawing herself up proudly, and pointing her finger at Foster Mix, she said, in words of scathing scorn:

"Until within the last half hour, I did not believe, Foster Mix, that such a reptile as you are existed in human form. Recognizing the possibility that you might believe the story, I wished to afford you one opportunity to avert the consequences of your villainy."

"Aunt, when you use epithets toward me, remember that I am the child of your husband's sister."

"I remember the fact with shame; and I remember other acts also. Two motives actuate your conduct—one of them is vengeance upon a helpless girl; the other, a desire to crush her by a curse which would place you in possession of these estates. Now, then, I ask you, will you turn back, or will you go on until your scheming shall recoil upon yourself, and you are crushed at the bottom of the pit which you have dug for others?"

Foster Mix was still calm and motionless, and his pale features were even wreathed by a bland smile as he replied:

"I have nothing but sympathy and commiseration for you, my dear aunt. I know how



you love that girl, and know it is possible that, while your judgment accepts the truth, your heart rejects it. I am not animated by a spirit of vengeance, nor by a sordid desire to obtain possession of what should not be legally mine; all I ask for—all I want—all I desire is, that justice should be done."

There was something terribly tragic and fearfully sublime in the attitude of that silver-haired woman, Mrs. Deane, as she enunciated, in tones of thrilling earnestness:

"It's justice, Foster Mix, that you ask for—it's justice that you shall have; and though the mills of the gods grind slowly, beware lest between the upper and the nether stone you are ground to powder!"

Foster Mix made no reply to the terrible words of Mrs. Deane.

The latter waited a moment, and then, motioning to Captain Mike to approach, she said, as she seized his arm:

"Captain Carragher, you will please escort me from that fellow's presence; the battle has now commenced, let him beware of the issue!"

After Mrs. Deane had departed from the room, Foster Mix turned to Colonel Wingate, and said:

"Colonel, have you any business with me, sir?"

"I have not," replied the lawyer.

"Then I will go," said Foster Mix, and in a stately manner he passed from the room.

### CHAPTER XXIII.

WHILE Foster Mix stood upon the piazza, waiting for his black horse to be brought around, he was startled by hearing a low growl.

Turning in the direction from whence the growl proceeded, he gave a start upon beholding, crouched at the foot of the steps, the massive blood-hound that had nearly terminated his career in front of the altar of the little church.

The flaming eyes of the beast were fastened upon him, and his jaws were ridged with threatening anger.

"Hang that beast!" muttered Foster Mix, fiercely, adding, as he drew a pistol from his pocket and cocked it; "that animal's too fierce and dangerous to live! I might as well destroy him at once! I will!"

Leveling his pistol, but holding it in such a manner that the keen-eyed monster could not detect his intentions, he was just about to place his finger upon the trigger, when a firm grasp fastened upon his wrist, and a stern voice exclaimed:

"Hold on: don't murder that dog! He has more human nature in him than ye have yersel!"

Foster Mix was a cool man, and personally brave and courageous, but he was not physically strong; on the contrary, Captain Mike, although past middle age, possessed muscles like whips, and physically was much stronger than the majority of younger men.

There was a murderous gleam in the eye of Foster Mix as he sought to wrest his hand away from the old Irishman.

Failing to free himself, in the hot anger of the moment, he raised his other hand and struck Captain Mike a smart blow upon the cheek.

Instantly the latter exerted all of his strength, and twisted the younger man's arm until, through sheer pain, he was compelled to drop the weapon.

"Only that I feared that the dog would tear ye to pieces, I'd lift ye down thim steps wid a rear fire of my foot!" exclaimed Captain Mike.

"You gray-haired villain!" fairly hissed Foster Mix, "heretofore your vulgar origin alone has prevented me from noticing your interference and insolence; but mark me, the next time I suffer through your meddlesomeness, I'll kill you!"

Captain Mike held the slender wrist of his opponent in his firm grasp, as he replied, placing a significant emphasis upon every word:

"Foster Mix, ye heartless divil! I know that ye're capable of making yer word good. Yer not only an assassin at heart, but in deed; but mind ye, afore ye have my life on yer hands, I'll see yer own terminated on the gallows!"

The pale face of Foster Mix assumed a leaden hue as he asked in a husky voice:

"What do you mean, you old dotard?"

"Ye're just the man to interpret my manin'," and Captain Mike fastened the gaze of his clear blue eyes straight in the eyes of the man he held.

"You shall be made to answer for these

words, and compelled to explain your meaning."

"I'll give an explanation to the first one that asks it."

"I ask it."

"Ye do?"

"I do."

"Then, by the powers! listen to me. I said that I'd see ye terminate yer life on the gallows?"

"Those were your words."

"Exactly; and would ye like ter know for what?"

"I would."

"For the murder of Captain Magruder!"

For once the cool self-possession of Foster Mix was knocked completely out of him; his eyes assumed a wild look of terror, a purple line circled his lips, and for a moment it seemed as though he was actually going to faint.

Captain Mike watched these startling evidences of guilt, with an expression upon his face of thrilling eagerness, and his own features assumed a death-like hue as he murmured:

"By the powers! I've driven the nail straight home!"

This was the first time since the disappearance of Captain Magruder that Foster Mix had heard his name connected with the dark mystery.

His agitation may have been the result of extreme indignation; but Captain Mike attributed it to another cause, and for the first time the conviction settled upon the old Irishman's heart that Captain Frank had been really murdered.

It was some time before the accused man sufficiently recovered from the first shock of the accusation to exclaim:

"You'll never regret those words but once."

"Nor you the deed that warranted the accusation."

"The charge is too preposterous for denial."

"Faith! ye might deny it until yer lies turned ye blacker in the face than yer terror did a moment ago, and they'd do ye no good."

"Unhand me!"

"Certainly," replied Mike, releasing him. "Faith! the less an honest man handles a snake like you, the cleaner his hands will be!"

The colored boy appeared at this moment, leading the black mare.

"Am I to be protected from that beast?" asked Foster Mix, as he stooped to pick up his pistol, which had been left lying upon the floor of the piazza.

"Faith! I can feed that dog on betther mate than covers your bones! But ye'll lave that pistol there, or ye'll have to take yer own chances wid the hound."

Foster Mix walked down a couple of steps, and the blood-hound uttered a low growl, but a word from the dog's master caused him to turn about, and move off toward the stables.

Foster Mix leaped into the saddle, and when just about to give his horse the reins, said:

"Old man, you have invited your own fate! You'll live long enough to rue this day!"

Captain Mike paid no attention to his enemy's dire threats, but commenced pacing up and down the broad piazza, whistling "Saint Patrick's Day in the Morning."

Upon the following morning, when Colonel Wingate left Deane Hall, he carried with him such instructions as demanded the taking of immediate legal steps to forever destroy the Hepsy Doane story.

The feeble health of Zenie's mother made it necessary that, at least legally, the foul rumor should be decided.

Should it be deferred, it was almost a dead certainty that Foster Mix would come in and claim the estates, under certain peculiar conditions of General Deane's will.

The intention was to bring the question directly before a legal tribunal by a bold stroke, no less than the arrest of Foster Mix on the charge of conspiracy.

In the meantime, Captain Mike and his bound daily made mysterious excursions.

The old Irishman would absent himself from home from morning until night, and when asked the object of his strange daily perambulations, would reply, with an ominous shake of the head:

"Bide yer time, bide yer time! The dog and I will strike the trail yet!"

One afternoon Mike returned from one of these strange rambles earlier than usual, and seating himself in the large rustic chair upon the piazza, was enjoying a quiet whiff of his pipe, with his faithful hound crouched beside him, when he observed two strangers, well-

mounted, pass through the park gate, and canter up toward the house.

"Who the divil can thim chaps be?" was Mike's audible observation as they drew near.

Riding boldly up to the house, the two strangers, who were two plain-looking men, deliberately picketed their horses, and, ascending the steps toward the piazza, one of them inquired:

"Is there a man about here named Captain Mike Carragher?"

"There's an old soldier about here by that name," replied Captain Mike.

"Is he around now?" came the question.

"Well, he's not far off."

"Are you the man?"

"Well, suppose I am!"

"If you are the man, we have a warrant for your arrest."

"Oh! ye have!" replied Captain Mike, in a peculiar tone, as he eyed the two men from head to foot.

### CHAPTER XXIV.

THE two men who had come to the Deane mansion submitted to Captain Mike's critical examination for a moment, and then replied to his exclamation:

"Yes, sir; our errand here to-day is to make an arrest."

"To make an arrest, eh?" said Captain Mike, in the same peculiar tone.

"Exactly," replied he spokesman of the two constables.

"To arrest who, me friends?"

"To arrest you, if you are Captain Carragher."

"But, me friends, I hev retired from the army."

"What has that to do with our business?"

"Begorra! that's yer own conundrum. I'm not studying puzzles nowadays."

"Well, we will answer the puzzle by making you a prisoner."

"But I tell ye that I am an old soger."

"Well, again, what has that got to do with us?"

"Well, I'll just answer that puzzle for ye, seein' as ye may find it difficult yersel's."

"Do so quickly, if you please."

"Well, my boys, an old soger niver surrenders as a prisoner widout a fight!"

"So you mean to offer resistance, eh, old man?"

"Well, I was thinkin' that I might act a bit on the define."

"You will not be wise; we are two against one."

"Faith, that's small odds wid an old campaigner agin raw recruits."

"We are armed, old man."

"For that matter, so am I."

"I hope you will give us no trouble."

"Faith, if ye will go off now about your business, ye will save yersels a heap of it."

"We are bound to take you, old graybeard."

"Make yer advance thim, me hearties, and ye may hev a taste of my artillery!" and as Captain Mike spoke, he produced a pair of pistols, and quietly cocked them.

"You are resisting the law," exclaimed the constable.

"The law, is it?" ejaculated Mike. "Is it constables ye are?"

"Yes, sir; we are constables."

"Well, now, look here, I thought ye were some stray sergeant and corporal who had made a mistake; but if you are constables, why, ov course, that makes a difference."

There was a humorous twinkle in Captain Mike's laughing blue eyes as he uttered his last speech.

Thinking that the old Irishman was impressed by a sense of their importance, and not recognizing that he was making sport of them, one of the men exclaimed:

"I thought you would think better of it."

"Faith, yer right; I came near wasting powder on yees; but if ye are only constables, be off wid yees, or I'll set the dog on ye."

It would be hard to describe the expression which came over the faces of both the men upon hearing this remarkable reply.

One of them remarked to the other:

"Why, the old cuss is crazy!"

"Not a bit of it," replied the other; "but I really believe that he is fooling us."

"Well, we can soon stop that, by putting the nippers on him."

Together they made one step toward the old



man, when a low, fierce growl caused them to halt.

"Shoot that infernal dog!" exclaimed one of them.

The other moved his hand as though about to draw a pistol, when Captain Mike exclaimed:

"Hold on, my friend. Don't yer move hand or fut, or I'll put a hole through ye!"

As Captain Mike spoke, he covered the man's heart with the muzzle of one of his pistols.

The other man now sought to draw a weapon, when the old Irishman covered him with the other pistol, and said, quietly:

"Hold on, you! I have ye both covered wid me heavy guns."

There was something in the quiet, determined attitude of the old man that warned the other two that it would be dangerous to move.

"Now, see here, me frinds," said Mike, a mischievous smile radiating from his handsome old face, "I was allays agin sindin' recruits on dangerous duty whin I was in the army. They nade drillin' fust—drillin', me boys!"

"You have the advantage only because we did not expect resistance."

"Faith, that's the great fault of recruits. They're too confident, and like you fellows, they're often brought up wid a short turn. Now, whist a bit, and we'll hev a little council of war under a flag of truce. What the devil hev ye come to arrest me for?"

"On a charge of assault and robbery."

"And who made that dirty charge agin an old soger?"

"Mr. Foster Mix."

"Ah, and that was just what I thought. And now see here—do ye both go back, and tell yer commanding officer that he must sind a larger force if he wants to capture me."

"Do you refuse to recognize the warrant?"

"Av course I do."

"You will get yourself into serious trouble."

"All right. But be off, now. I'll release ye on parole."

One of the men was more cunning than the other, and he said:

"All right; we will accept our release on parole for the present," and he was about moving away, when Captain Mike called out:

"Howld on! We must do this little business accordin' to the articles of war."

The constable had thought that by pretending to comply, he could get out of the range of Captain Mike's pistol, and then, by drawing his own, have an equal advantage.

The old Irishman's next request banished this idea.

"The first thing a soldier does," said the old man, "whin he surrenders is to lay down his weapons. Ye will just comply wid that article, in the first place, if ye plaze."

"Hang the old rogue!" muttered the constable, as he drew his pistol from his pocket.

"That is right," said Mike. "Now ye can just lave it down, if ye plaze."

The man laid down the pistol on the piazza.

"Ye can just lay down yer weapon also," said Captain Mike, addressing the other constable.

With rueful face, the other man complied, when Captain Mike told his dog:

"Go fetch them things here."

To the surprise of both men, the hound obeyed, walking over and taking one pistol at a time, and depositing them soberly at his master's feet.

"Me dog is purty well drilled in tactics," said Mike, and then added: "Now me frinds, ye are on parole."

## CHAPTER XXV.

THE chagrin of the two constables can be better imagined than described.

They had started off with their warrant, under the impression that they had merely to arrest a feeble old man.

Instead of making walking arsenals of themselves, as usual, it had so happened that the only two weapons they had carried were the two pistols that Captain Mike had ordered them to lay down under the articles of war.

When the intelligent old hound had carried these into camp, they were left totally unarmed, and at the mercy of the old captain.

But one thing remained for them to do—that was to accept the situation, and retreat in good order.

After the two law officers had mounted, and were about to ride away, Captain Mike called out, in a semi-taunting tone:

"I suppose you'll bring up yer reserves now?"

"Very likely," replied one of the constables.

"You'll not make a charge agin me of robbing ye of yer pistols, I hope?"

"No, old man; we'll consider them surrendered according to your articles of war."

"Well, good-day to yez."

"Good-day," replied the men, as they drew off.

"Faith! that's a dirty trick of Foster Mix," muttered Mike; "but by the powers! I'll spoil that trick, seein', though, that I'll have to ride to town and give bail. Faith! military law beats civil law, when ye have a regiment at yer back; but one old soger wouldn't stand much show agin a dozen constables."

While Mike was thinking over the awkwardness of the situation, and the inconvenience that his enemys' paltry tactics would occasion him, the two constables had arrived at a point in the road where they thought it necessary to hold a few moments' consultation.

"There's one thing certain," remarked one of them, "we can't go back, Craft, without the prisoner our warrant calls for."

"That's my idea of it, Hayden," replied the other. "This would be a pretty story against us if the facts were known."

"Yes, sir; I'd rather put the muzzle of my pistol into my mouth, and pull the trigger with my own hand, than have my tongue to tell how we were disarmed by an old man and a dog."

"Darn it! the old feller bluffed us dead!"

"Not all a bluff, after all; the old cuss meant mischief. By thunder! but he was keen! He heard us coming, and before I really thought of resistance at all."

"Well, what are we going to do now?"

"We must go somewhere, put ourselves on a war footing, go back and get our prisoner—there's nothing else to do."

"Do you think we'll find him there when we go back?"

"We've got to take that chance. There's one thing certain, I don't leave this part of the country until I put a charge of buckshot in that darned hound!"

"It was kind o' awkward to stand there and see that dog walk off with both of those pistols. I imagined all the time I could see a broad gain on the beast's face."

"Hang it! I felt like grinning myself, only we were the subjects of the joke."

"Between you and me, Craft, I wouldn't like to see the old man hurt; he's a game old cuss."

"Well, that's the way I feel about it. If I wasn't afraid the story would leak out, I'd rather ride back and report the man the warrant calls for as *non est*."

"There's one thing sure: we've got to take him unawares, or fight; that old fellow will get hurt, or hurt somebody before he'll be made a prisoner."

"I'll tell you what we can do, partner, we can ride back, and we can compromise with the old warrior."

"How will we do that?"

"On condition that he shall say nothing about the little rig he got on us. We'll serve the warrant, and accept his word to answer the summons on his honor."

"Can we rely on his pledge?"

"When the old man passes his word, you can lay your life on the fulfillment of it."

The foregoing conversation clearly indicates that the two constables were really brave men, belonging to that class of brave men who, under the circumstances, instead of feeling a petty spite toward the old Irishman, felt their hearts warm toward him with admiration for his coolness and courage.

They felt that the old Irishman had only acted, under the circumstances, like any other brave man.

He had made a point on them, and they resolved to accept the situation good-naturedly.

"What do you say, Craft? Shall we go back and fix this business as I propose?"

"I'm agreed to anything you suggest."

"Well, all right! Here goes, and I hope this time we'll have better success in serving the warrant."

A few moments after the two constables appeared a second time cantering up the carriage-way, toward the entrance to the Deane mansion.

When within about a hundred feet of the house they were brought to a sudden and unexpected halt.

"Hold on, there! I expected yez would be back!"

The two constables did hold on upon beholding Captain Mike standing alongside one of the

pillars supporting the portico, with a double barreled shot-gun in his hand.

"Begorra, it's grape and canister I'll be after givin' ye if ye don't lave now intirely!"

One of the constables sung out:

"We want to hold another council of war, captain."

"Oh! I understand yees! Ye've just been armng yersel's, and yer back here to raise the devil! Now, I want yees to understand jist one thing, and ye can make up yer mind to it first as last—ye'll never take me prisoner alive."

"We don't want to take you prisoner, captain. We've got a proposition to make."

"Ride up, one of yees, and make yer proposition."

One of the constables advanced his horse, while the other remained stationery.

Captain Mike kept his shot-gun at a level until the constable approached, and, throwing up his hands, showed that he was unarmed.

"Now, thin, what have ye to say?" asked Captain Mike.

"I want to say, that so far you've got the best of us," replied the constable, good-naturedly.

"Faith, that's the fortune of war!" said Mike. "The man that's licked to-day may be the victor to-morrow; and what's the proposition ye have to make?"

"I want to serve the warrant, and receive your word of honor to voluntarily answer the summons."

"Faith, if ye mean fair and honest, I'll agree to that."

"But I have a condition to make."

"What's your condition?"

"That you give us back our pistols, and promise to say nothing about the manner in which you captured them."

A broad smile overspread Captain Mike's good-humored face, as he asked:

"Are ye disposed to take that as a good joke?"

"The best joke we ever played a part in."

"And ye have no hard feelin'?"

"Not a bit."

"Faith, I believe yer two good, square men, and I'm almost inclined to go along wid ye, only that it would be very inconvenient at present."

"Will you acknowledge the service of the warrant?"

"Av course I will!"

The legal conditions for the formal service of the warrant were fulfilled, and the constables were invited to remain overnight.

The latter gladly accepted the invitation, and upon the following morning, Captain Carragher rode over in their company, and furnished bail for his future appearance to answer the charge.

It was after nightfall when the brave old Irishman was on the road returning toward home.

Knowing full well the dangerous character of his enemy, and realizing that at any moment the same assassins who had murdered Captain Magruder might suddenly spring out upon him, Captain Mike was on his guard.

A few moments after striking under the shadow of the woods, through which a portion of his road lay, the necessity for his caution was proven.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

To those who are not acquainted with the fact, we will state that, previous to the war, and at the time we write, in that part of the country where the incidents of our story are laid it was almost the universal custom for men to go armed.

In some of our states and territories at the present day this custom still prevails.

If any of our readers consider this statement an exaggeration, we would invite them to hop on a through train of the Pacific Railroad and travel as far as Colorado and Nevada, and if they don't meet walking arsenals at every turn, we'll admit that our statement is an exaggeration.

The moment Captain Mike came under the shadow of the trees of the dense woods, he cocked his holster pistols, and had them unstrapped and ready for instant service, while he carried a cocked revolver also in his hand.

"By the powers!" he muttered to himself, as he rode along, "it's not often I'm troubled with the blues, but I have a strange falin', as though something were about to happen."

At this instant his soliloquy was interrupted by hearing a crackling of the dry leaves, as though some one were trampling over them.

Captain Mike brought his horse to an instant halt, and listened.



The night was so pitch dark that he was compelled to depend entirely upon his sense of hearing, as it was almost impossible to distinguish even the outlines of an object a man's-length distant.

The sound ceased, seemingly at the same instant that the old man had brought his horse to a halt.

"Faith, me ears may have fooled me that time," muttered Mike; "and it's just possible that an old campaigner like me may be gittin' nervous. Faith, it's not an unusual thing to hear all kinds of quare noises in the forest at night-time."

For a full minute he stopped and listened, but not hearing a repetition of the sound, urged his horse forward, at the same time resuming his soliloquy, with the remark:

"Begorra, from the first I had it in my mind that that warrant was only a pretense to get me upon the road so that I might become the prey of the hired murderers of that black-hearted scoundrel, Foster Mix. Faith," he continued after a moment, "it stands a man in hand, in these parts, to be ready for any emergency."

At this instant Mike's soliloquy was cut short by the sharp report of a rifle, and the whiz of a bullet over his horse's head.

"Begorra, that's one of the emergencies!" exclaimed the old man, as he leaped from the saddle and took shelter beside his horse, opposite from the direction whence the bullet had come.

In leaping from his horse so quickly, and taking shelter beside him, proved the thoroughly soldierly experience of Captain Mike.

Immediately after he displayed a second soldierly precaution.

Slowly and noiselessly, as though the animal's hoofs were muffled, Captain Mike backed him down.

His object for changing his position was founded upon the following conclusion:

Owing to the intense darkness the assassin had judged his aim by the sound alone, and it was impossible that he could have distinguished the object aimed at.

The keen and experienced Irishman further reasoned, that the marksman, in discharging a second shot, would move his range a little forward, supposing that the rider would advance a few steps before halting.

This is why the wily old man backed his horse from the position instead of leading him forward.

The correctness of the old soldier's conclusions was quickly confirmed.

A second shot followed the first, and the ball buried itself in a tree bordering the road at least twenty feet distant in advance.

Captain Mike's horse, like his hound, was well trained. Most of the old man's time had been spent in company with the two beasts, and the result was that both were thoroughly "drilled," as the old man termed it.

After the second shot was discharged, Captain Mike discovered another shrewd point.

Leaving his horse standing in the road, he silently stole up near the point where the second bullet had struck, and with the barrel of one of his holster pistols resting on his arm, waited patiently waited for a third shot.

He did not have long to wait. The third shot quickly followed, and singularly enough, as was betrayed by the whiz of a bullet, ranged directly between the first and the second.

"Kape that up me frind," muttered the old soldier, "and afore long I'll save the hangman a nice job."

In the meantime, the old man stole back to where he had left his horse standing in the road, and quietly caused the noble animal to lie down, as obediently as a trick horse in a circus.

"Now thin, we'll go on wid the skirmish," muttered Captain Mike, as he dropped on his hands and knees and crawled forward to his former position.

After the usual interval, a fourth shot came, and as near as the old man could judge, the ball flew directly over the spot where the horse lay in the road.

This last shot disclosed another fact also—the assassin was advancing after each discharge.

"Come on, me frind!" muttered Mike, as coolly as though he was a looker-on at a pigeon match. "Come on, me frind," he added, "and we'll have a subject for a black undertaker purty soon!"

Some moments passed, and a grave-like silence followed.

"All right," muttered Mike, as he still

keenly listened. "That nagur's curiosity will ind in a funeral oration by a black parson."

Finally, after full ten minutes' listening, Captain Mike's patience was rewarded by hearing the snapping of a dry twig.

"Be the powers! I don't know as I ought to kill that feller. Begorra! it's a cunninger head than his that put him up to this murther. If I could git a fair crack at the rascal, I'd give him the tip of a bullet as would create the fondness for a crutch for the rest of his life! But faith! such a night as this it's one or the other of us, and it's bether him than me!"

Another interval of silence followed, when again Captain Mike gave utterance to his thoughts by remarking:

"If I had the hound here, now, I reckon that nagur would have to get a new sate to his pantaloons."

Again the cool-headed old man heard the crackling of dry leaves, and a moment later distinguished the outlines of the head and shoulders of a human form protruding from the brush bordering the road-side directly opposite where he stood.

"Bang!" came the sharp report of a pistol, followed by a shriek and a groan, and the next instant a dark object rolled and writhed in the center of the road.

"I had to do it," was the remark of Captain Mike, as he rose to his feet and stood beside the struggling form.

The struggles of the victim of the old Irishman's shot were of short duration.

Soon the writhing ceased, and the contorted limbs stiffened in death.

"I thought that feller's curiosity would kill him," quietly remarked Mike, as he knelt beside the dead man.

Taking a match from his vest pocket, and igniting it on his knee, he held the sputtering flame over the victim's face.

Instantly, with an exclamation of surprise, he said, as the little blue flame illuminated the ghastly features:

"Be the powers! but it's a white man. Divil a regrit have I now—a man that could sell himself to commit a murther is as bad as the scoundrel that hired him, and the world's well rid of the like of him at any time!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

THE natural tenderness of heart of Captain Mike was betrayed by the remark he made upon discovering that the ill-fated assassin was a white man.

The words, "Faith! I have no regret now!" were suggestively significant.

Had the intended assassin proved to have been a black man, there would remain some allowance for his intended crime, owing to the fact of his ignorance, and the possible contingency of his having been a slave whose will was his master's.

The same allowance could not be made for a white man; one of the latter could only have been influenced by a lust for gain.

"Ye lay there!" said Mike, rising to his feet, "and may your fate be a warning to the man who hired ye, if he has the courage to gaze upon yer distorted features; the same awaits himself if he continues to seek for my blood!"

Having delivered himself of the above speech, Captain Mike went to his horse, and starting him to his feet, mounted, and rode away toward home.

It was two days before the old Irishman heard any rumors of the finding of the body of his victim.

The man proved to be a stranger in the vicinity where his body was found, but upon the inquest the fact was established that the dead man was an infamous character well known in Louisville.

The efforts to discover the mode of his death were not very searching. The proof of his infamous character appeared to impress the jury that the fellow most likely lost his life in some unlawful undertaking.

The verdict was the usual one in such cases—"killed in some manner to the jury unknown"—and in a country where fatal encounters were of frequent occurrence, the death of this man caused but little excitement, and the tragic circumstance was speedily forgotten.

Captain Mike, as he read an account of the inquest, felt satisfied that there was one man who could guess pretty correctly the manner of the stranger's death, and he felt assured also that the same individual would be the most anxious to have the matter pass out of memory.

A few days subsequent to the events above related, quite an excitement was occasioned throughout the state by the arrest of Foster Mix, by the widow of his uncle, on a charge of conspiracy.

The excitement attending this startling event had hardly subsided when the horrors of a former sensation were revived in a wonderful and startling manner.

As previously mentioned, Captain Mike had been in the habit of daily making mysterious excursions, in company with his hound.

Immediately after his encounter in the woods with the secret assassin, the old man resumed these strange rambles.

One afternoon after a long tramp, Captain Mike seated himself upon a fallen tree, and according to a habit of communing with himself, audibly remarked, as he produced his pipe:

"I wonder where the divil that hound can be? It's two hours now since I saw hide or hair of the dog! Faith! there must be something up to attract the baste away for so long a while."

Captain Mike had finished his pipe, and was about to resume his tramp toward home, when he heard the deep bay of the hound.

"Begorra!" he exclaimed, "here comes the dog now!"

A few moments later the beast came in view.

As the usually quiet animal crouched before his master, it betrayed peculiar signs of excitement, similar to those when the dead body of the negro was scented on the bank of the river.

Upon observing the restless movements of the dog, his old master also became greatly excited.

Old Captain Mike well knew what the signs of the intelligent beast meant, and soon the hound was away upon a trail, followed by his master.

Away through the woods sped the dog, followed by the wiry old man.

It was near nightfall, when a death howl fell upon Captain Mike's ears, notifying him that the beast had struck the end of his scent.

"Oh, murther! oh, murther!" moaned Mike, as a look of agony swept over his usually cheerful features. "Woe is me! woe is me!" he added, as he staggered along through the thick brush.

Finally he reached a ledge overlooking a gully twenty feet in depth.

Down, just below him, he discovered the dog crouched at the verge of a hole, in which was disclosed portions of a skeleton.

"I feared it! I feared it!" muttered the old man. "Me tramps day after day have terminated, as I thought in the end they must; the dog has solved the mystery after all."

It was some time before Captain Mike found a place where he could descend.

At length he managed to clamber down to the bed of the gully, and with eyes blinded with tears, and throbbing heart, in anticipation of the terrible discovery he was about to make, the faithful old man staggered down toward the spot where the dog was crouching beside the skeleton.

It was evident that during the heavy rain, the bed of the gully was the channel of a temporary torrent.

When Captain Mike arrived beside the hole, he was convinced that it was the water that had washed away the earth, exposing the skeleton to view.

Cutting a sappling and sharpening the point with his jackknife, the old man began to dig away the soft earth.

After a short time his labors were rewarded by the discovery of an article that caused him to exclaim:

"I thought so! I thought so!"

The article which he had discovered was a saddle, and a moment's examination convinced him of the fact, that it belonged to Captain Magruder.

Still further examination brought to light a bridle.

"Faith, this was the captain's too," said Mike. "Now, thin, to find the skeleton of the poor murdered captain himself."

The old man dug and dug until the skeleton of a horse was completely uncovered, but not the least sign of human bones could he find.

"Faith, this accounts for the mysterious disappearance of the captain's horse. But where have the red-handed murderers buried the rider?" The old man started the dog on a search for another scent.

Up and down the gully he tramped for a mile or more in opposite directions from where he



had found the skeleton of the horse, but the faithful hound failed to strike a fresh scent.

Captain Mike returned to where he had been digging, and while standing there revolving the circumstances in his mind, he muttered:

"Well, well, so far so good. I have found the grave of the horse, and by the powers, if there's virtue in perseverance, I'll find the grave of the murdered man also. Then, Foster Mix, ye can look to yersel'. I have said I'd see ye upon the gallows, an' I'll kape me word."

The shadows of night were lengthening, and a weird gloom was falling over the forest which bordered the gully as Captain Mike caught up the once buried saddle and bridle and started toward home.

While the faithful old soldier was digging away, excavating the earth where he had found the saddle and bridle of his friend, little did he dream that a pair of eyes were watching his every movement.

Once or twice the hound utter an ominous growl, but owing to the excitement of the discovery, the master of the dog had paid little attentions to the growl.

Bearing the result of his discoveries with him, the old man trudged homeward.

It was night when he passed through the broad gate leading up to the Deane mansion.

Wearied and tired, he was glad to reach home, when the low growls of the hound finally attracted his attention.

"Begorra, there's something on the dog's mind," exclaimed Mike as he laid down the saddle and bridle, and intimidated to the dog to be away.

With a low, fierce bark the excited animal bounded off.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

As Captain Mike started to follow the hound, he heard a yell of terror, followed by a voice exclaiming:

"Call off the dog! call off the dog!"

When our old hero got out in the road, he saw a man standing there, with the hound crouched before him, the latter uttering low, warning growls.

"Who are ye, and what are ye prowling around here for?" asked Captain Mike.

"Can't a man go along the road about his business without being set upon by a fierce beast like that?"

"Give way, Tiger—give way!" said Mike, calling to the dog; and then addressing the man, added:

"What's yer name?"

"None of your business," replied the man, in a surly tone.

"Look here, my friend," said Mike, "suppose I should make it none of my business, and let the dog alone—what would become of you?"

"If you are the owner of the dog, it is your business to call him off."

"By the same token, as your prowling around here's a little suspicious, it's yer business to give an account of yerself. I never knew that baste to interfere wid a body that didn't require watching."

"If I'd had a barker in my pocket about me, I'd hushed the bark of that four-legged devil forever."

"Never mind the barker; but where did you come from?"

"It's none o' yer business."

"You're a mane cur, wheriver ye came from. I have a mind to let the dog shake a little of yer insolence out o' ye!"

"If you should do that, Captain Carragher, you'd get yourself in trouble."

"So yer acquainted wid me, are ye?"

"'Twould be strange if I wasn't."

"Well, now, look here, me frind—I suppose ye'd like to be off about yer business, wouldn't ye?"

"I would."

"Well, ye'll answer me one question, anyhow, first. How long have ye been following me?"

"I haven't been following you at all."

"Where were ye going whin the dog flew at ye?"

"I was going to Braham's place."

"Yer sure ye wasn't following me?"

"I'll take my oath that I wasn't."

"All right. Ye can go now; but I want ye to remember one thing—the hound will be loose to-night, and if he catches ye prowling around here after this, I may not be near to prevint his tearing ye to pieces."

The man passed on his way, and Captain

Mike returned to where he had left the saddle and bridle, and picking them up, proceeded down to the house.

Upon the very day that the old Irishman and his dog were rambling through the woods, and were rewarded by the remarkable discovery in the gully, a strange scene was transpiring in a law office in the city of Louisville.

Directly opposite the court house, facing one side of the square on which the temple of justice is located, is situated a row of one-story brick buildings, occupied exclusively by lawyers.

Seated in one of these offices, and engaged in an earnest conversation with a sharp-eyed, intelligent, cunning-looking man, was Foster Mix.

At the moment we introduce these parties to the reader the lawyer had just made the remark:

"There's no question about the fact, Mr. Mix; if that old man, Captain Carragher, goes on the stand as a witness, the effect of all your proofs will be blown from the minds of the jury as easily and effectually as I blow these ashes off the end of my cigar."

"Is there no way to impugn his standing in court as a witness?"

"I have thought of that, and made inquiries, and the result is that that old man has as fine a record, as a soldier and gentleman, as any officer that was ever honorably discharged from the service of the United States. It's wonderful in what esteem the old fellow is held."

"And you have ascertained the nature of his testimony, eh?"

"I have; and it will kill the effect of that of your three witnesses dead."

Foster Mix for some moments was lost in intense thought, but at length said:

"I believe, in my written statement furnished to Colonel Wingate, that I have been very precise in giving the exact time and minute details, containing the exchange of infants?"

"Unfortunately for your case, you have; and that old Captain Mike stands like a massive stone wall against all the corroborative evidence that you can bring to support those details."

"Then that old scoundrel will perjure himself."

"Certainly, if your statements are truthful."

"Do you intend to insinuate that they are not?"

"No, sir; I have no such intention. You must remember that we lawyers are compelled to recognize only the legal aspect of testimony."

"And you assure me that the testimony of this one man is a certain bar to the sworn affidavits that I have to produce?"

"Frankly, yes, sir; and it is a singular fact, that this old man's story is in accordance with the character that some of the best men in the country give him—he has the credit for a faithfulness that is truly wonderful, and a bull-dog-like tenacity of purpose."

"Then, as the case stands, that old rascal can perjure me out of my reputation as a gentleman and a man of honor, and eventually debar me from the inheritance of my uncle's estates?"

"If this matter comes to a trial, and he ever goes upon the witness stand, it's my impression that would be the result."

"Then you don't value this miniature business—this resemblance part of their case?"

"That's very nice in romance—very pretty for a stage situation—but very weak in law, when put against the sworn testimony of your witnesses; in other words, morally it's presumptively strong, but legally very feathery."

"You can't suggest any way of getting over the evidence of this old man, then?"

"There is but one suggestion I can offer, if this trial can be staved off until the old man drops into his grave, why you've got a sure case."

"Suppose this Captain Carragher should be convicted of a capital crime?"

"What do you reckon is a capital crime?"

"Murder."

"The lawyer fastened his keen eyes upon the stolid face of his client, and there was a peculiar significance in the tones of his voice as he muttered, reflectively:

"That might do."

"If this fellow was arrested on a charge of murder, would it prevent him appearing as a witness?"

"That would depend somewhat upon the nature of the circumstances that indicated his guilt."

"If he was convicted of murder, he couldn't testify, could he?"

"Yours is a simple proposition. If he was convicted of murder he would probably be

hung, and we have an old piratical tradition that 'dead men tell no tales.'

Foster Mix rose to take his departure.

As he drew on his gloves he asked:

"When is this case to come on?"

"It will be two months yet."

"Two months?"

"Yes, sir; certainly not sooner than that."

Foster Mix stepped toward the door, then turned and said, in the quiet, deliberate manner peculiar to him:

"You may go on with this matter as though that Irishman were already hung!" and, without another word, he went out of the lawyer's office.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

Two or three days subsequent to Captain Mike's discovery in the bed of the gully, the beautiful Zenie Deane was returning from a short ride on horseback, when, as she was slowly cantering along the road, her animal suddenly pricked up its ears and shied to one side, and finally came to a dead halt.

The Kentucky girl, who was a splendid horsewoman, lashed the beast furiously, at the same time urging him forward.

Her attention being absorbed in the effort to urge her horse forward prevented her for a moment from observing what the object was that had occasioned his strange antics.

Chancing to glance forward, she discovered the cause of the animal's terror.

Standing directly in the road, she beheld the bent form of an old negro.

Seeing that he was observed by the beautiful rider, the old negro exclaimed:

"Bress your heart, Miss Zenie, but yer am got de blood ob de ole ginerl in yer veins, shuah! But let de hoss stan', chile. I se come a long putty good ways for an ole man like me, to hab a little talk wid yer."

"Why, Uncle Pete, I haven't seen you in a long time!"

"No, chile, hi, hi! de ole 'man's' body am most gub out, but his head am clar! Yah, yah, him head am clar; can't fool de ole man nohow!"

"How have they been trying to fool you, Uncle Pete?" said Zenie, as she leaped out of the saddle and led her horse up to where the old man was standing.

"Chile, de ole man's ears am wide open. I jes heerd all dem stories dat am goin' aroun' 'bout de ole massa's darter. She's his own chile, shuah!"

Zenie saw at once that the old man had heard the rumors concerning herself, and concluded that the good-hearted old negro had traveled miles to come and assure her of his disbelief in them, and she said:

"I'm very grateful to you, Uncle Pete, for disbelieving those awful stories."

"Couldn't do nuffin else but disbelieb 'em, chile. I want yer ter understan' dat I was born on de Deane place, and when yer fader's sister war married to General Mix, de ole man gub me to his darter; an' when de missis died, ob course I war lef' dar on de Mix place; but I se a Deane all froo, chile. I don't done like de young massa, yer cousin Foster Mix, nohow. He ain't like de ole stock. Golly, chile! I se afeard he am a berry bad man!"

"What makes you think so, Uncle Pete?"

"I seed a good many tings, chile, dat I don't like—many, many tings dat I don't speak, 'kase I 'member his mudder was a Deane—de young massa am a cruel man!"

"He certainly has acted very cruel in allowing these rumors to circulate concerning me."

"I se afeard dat ain't all, chile," said the old man, assuming a solemn look, and shaking his head ominously.

"Have you got anything to tell me, Uncle Pete?" asked Zenie, judging from the old man's manner that he had something to communicate.

The old negro looked around carefully in every direction, evidently to see that there were no person near to overhear.

Apparently satisfied that there was no one in the vicinity, he answered, in a low tone, and in a very mysterious manner:

"Dunno, chile, ma'be it am berry 'portant and ma'be it don't 'mount to nuffin; but I jest taught dat I come ober an' let yer know what I se got ter say."

"Well, Uncle Pete, what have you got to tell me?"

"You don't recommember, Miss Zenie, dat when I war home on de ole place dat de ole massa's darter taught dis yer chile to read?"



"Yes, I knew, Uncle Pete that you were able to read your Bible."

"Yes, chile, de ole man kin read putty well; but yer know dat my gran'darter am laundry girl ober to de Mix place."

"Have you come 'way over here to tell me that, Uncle Pete?"

"No, no, chile, he! he! he! Dat war a good ways to come fur de ole man wid sich news."

"Well, tell me, Uncle Pete, what you really did come so far for?"

"I'se comin' at it, chile, I'se comin' at it; but Cap'n Magruder, he war gwine to marry de young missus."

A pallor overspread Zenie's lovely face and a pained look settled upon her features instantly upon the mention of Captain Magruder's name.

"What have you got to tell about the captain?" she asked, with tremulous excitement.

"I'se comin' at it, missy."

"Speak out directly, Uncle Pete, if you have anything to tell."

"Yah, yah, chile, I git 'round dar, you jis wait. De cap'n, he hab been missin' two, free months?"

"Yes, Uncle Pete, and—oh, Heaven! we fear that he was murdered!"

"Can't tell, chile, can't tell!" and suddenly the old man drew from his pocket a white handkerchief, and, extending it toward Zenie, said, in a mysterious manner: "Look at dat, chile, look at dat, and tell de ole man ef yer see enyt'ing."

Zenie seized the handkerchief, and, glancing at it hastily, replied:

"No, Uncle Pete, I don't see anything peculiar about this handkerchief."

"Don't yer see nuffin, missy?"

"Only that it is a white handkerchief of fine quality."

"Golly, chile, de ole man's eyes am de sharpest arter all!" and seizing one corner of the handkerchief in his hand, the negro pointed to the faint outlines of some initial letters in one corner. "What yer see dar, chile? What am dat?"

The imprint was very indistinct, but after a close examination, Zenie managed to decipher the letters, F. W. M., U. S. A.

As the beautiful girl deciphered these initials she clutched the handkerchief with a wild energy, her eyes became fixed, and her features rigid, as in a husky voice she murmured:

"Frank Webster Magruder, United States Army. Oh, Heaven! How came this handkerchief in the possession of Foster Mix?"

"Dat's what's been boderin' ole Uncle Pete, Miss Zenie. Neber saw de cap'n at de Mix place. Den how come de handkercher dar? Dat's what boddies me."

"It more than bothers me, Uncle Pete. It fills my brain with the most horrible suspicion."

"Den it war 'portant dat I bring dat ober, chile?"

"Yes; it is very important, Uncle Pete, and yet I almost wish you never had, that you had never found it! Dear me! dear me! it's a blessed thought that an open grave awaits us, and that there is an end at last to the torturing trials, the sorrow, the misery and weariness of this life! Uncle Pete," Zenie added, after a moment, "have you mentioned to any person besides me the finding of this handkerchief?"

"No, missy; nobody know dat I foun' it."

"Well, don't ever tell anybody, Uncle Pete; promise me that?"

"I nebbber tell nobody, when you tell me so, chile."

"You must come home with me, Uncle Pete, and stay until to-morrow; it is too long a walk for you in one day, to attempt to return this afternoon."

"No, no, chile; I'se gwine home! I'se gwine home!"

Zenie tried to persuade him, but the old man persisted, and finally hobbled away, only turning to exclaim:

"Look 'ere, chile, dat 'ar handkercher don't say dat de cap'n am dead; it only say dat ma'be young Massa Mix he knows more den he's bound ter tell!"

After delivering himself of this speech the old negro disappeared in the brush.

With a heavy heart and a sad face Zenie remounted her horse and drove home.

As she alighted and ascended the steps of the piazza, she encountered Captain Mike; the latter, observing the strange look upon her face, exclaimed:

"By the powers! what ails the child? What has happened?"

Zenie made no reply, but staggered to a seat.

## CHAPTER XXX.

ZENIE was not usually demonstrative, having been peculiarly quiet and reserved in her sorrow since that fatal night when her lover disappeared so mysteriously.

Her unusual excitement upon this occasion convinced faithful Mike that something extraordinary must surely have happened.

Stepping beside her chair, he waited a moment, and then said:

"Come, child, tell me what has happened."

Still, without speaking, Zenie extended the handkerchief toward him, with the finger pointing toward the corner where the initials were.

"Faith, child, what do you hand me the handkerchief for? Are ye preparin' me for a cry in advance?"

"Look! look!" ejaculated Zenie.

"I see the handkerchief," said Mike; adding, aside, "Faith has the child gone out of her head intirely, like Ophelia in the play?"

"Not the handkerchief!" cried Zenie; "those initials! those initials!"

Captain Mike put his glasses before his eyes, and looking closer discovered the letters, F. W. M., U. S. A.

Instantly the old man's whole demeanor changed, and he asked, excitedly:

"Where did ye get this, darlin'?"

Zenie related the story of her meeting with Uncle Pete on the road.

"Ah! ha!" exclaimed Mike, "I wish the old nagur had brought this to me furst; but niver mind, child, it's only another corroboration of my theory."

"And what is your theory, Captain Mike?"

"That Frank Magruder is still alive! So cheer up, and I'll throw a fut at yer weddin' yit; but ye must lave this handkerchief with me, Zenie. By the powers! it's only another link in the chain of evidence."

Still, without giving any explanation of his object, Captain Mike continued his daily rambles in company with his hound.

Five months had passed since the disappearance of Captain Frank Magruder, and not a ray of light had been let in upon that terrible mystery.

Upon the day following the incident of the handkerchief, Captain Mike, for the twentieth time since his first discovery, made a journey with his hound to the gully in the woods.

Winter had passed since that fatal night, and the spring rains had followed, and once again the bed of the gully had become dry save for a little rill that danced along the narrow channel in the center.

Up and down through this ravine Mike was tramping slowly with his dog, studying every point and landmark, when suddenly the hound bounded from his side, and crouched over a spot some twenty feet up a side gully, the entrance to which hitherto had escaped the old man's notice.

"By the powers! I've found it at last!" he muttered, "after all my many days' tramps."

Leaving the dog stretched upon the ground, Captain Mike retraced his steps until he reached a crevice, from which he drew forth a small garden spade, when he returned to where he had left the dog and commenced to dig.

"Faith," muttered Mike, "I think I'm handier with the sword thin I am with the spade, if I am an Irishman."

Despite his unhandiness with the spade, it was not long before he was startled by seeing a piece of decayed clothing upon the tip of his spade.

The old man's heart began to thump as he beat the dirt from the remnant, and discovered that the color was blue.

"Faith, there's an ind of my theory," he fairly groaned as he stood with the cloth in his hand and gazed at it with a sad expression upon his face, such as one wears when gazing at the rigid features of a dead friend.

He resumed his work, and the next thing brought to light was a spur.

"Woe's me! woe's me!" uttered Captain Mike, as he mechanically picked up the little heel-piece of steel and gazed at it with the same sad expression he had worn when surveying the cloth.

For the third time he commenced digging, and finally succeeded in laying bare the ghastly remains of a human form.

"Poor Frank! poor Frank! it's little I thought, when I gave ye a 'God speed' that night upon the crest of the hill that I'd ever

be called upon to perform such a sad duty as has fallen to me now!"

We will not horrify our readers by describing the condition of the remains.

The fact that they had been buried for five months would plainly indicate that they had moldered past all recognition.

The heart-broken old man engaged in that ghastly job, discovered, beyond all question of doubt, sufficient to establish the identity of those human remains.

It was a remarkable fact, that he found remnants of all the clothing worn by Captain Frank Magruder when last seen alive, except the hat—that was missing.

But he did discover the ill-fated young officer's hunting-case watch, with his initials stamped on the inner side of the cover, his pocket-book, and last of all, his silver-mounted pistol.

"But for one reason," muttered Mike, "I would throw these things back into the grave, and leave them there until that great day, when the murdered and the murderer shall stand face to face in eternity! but I want them—they are links in the chain that I am forging."

He bestowed the articles about his person, and commenced throwing the dirt back into the grave, when he was startled by observing the hound move away, uttering low, fierce growls.

An instant later he heard the tramp of many feet, and the sound of human voices.

"Come here, Tiger," he called to the dog, and stopped and listened.

The steps and the voices came nearer.

"By the powers! Who can be coming to this lonely place?" he exclaimed, as the blood chilled in his veins, upon remembering the awkward position he would be in in case he should be discovered standing beside that partly excavated grave.

It was a terrible moment, as he stood, spade in hand, listening.

"Quiet, Tiger! quiet, Tiger!" he said, in a low voice to the dog, as the animal began to display signs of restiveness.

Nearer and nearer the steps, until at length they suddenly ceased.

With a shudder Captain Mike recognized that the party had halted directly opposite to the entrance to the gully.

Another moment of terrible suspense passed, when suddenly Captain Mike beheld a dozen armed men coming toward him.

The moment the approaching party discovered the old man, half a dozen shot guns and revolvers were leveled at his breast, while the leader of the party called out:

"Captain Carragher! in the name of the law, and by virtue of a regular warrant, I call upon you to surrender!"

It was a splendid picture presented by the gray-haired old man, as he stood, with his silver locks streaming down upon his shoulders, his eyes blazing with fury, and his bosom heaving with indignation.

Again called out the leader of the party:

"Captain Carragher!—I call upon you to surrender!"

"Faith! it is a brave call for ye to make, wid a dozen guns aimed at a single old man's heart! But tell me, what's the maivin' of all this?"

"I hold a warrant for your arrest!"

"Arrest for what?"

"The murder of Captain Frank Magruder!"

## CHAPTER XXXI.

"AND who has charged me with the murder of a young man that I would hev died to protect from harm?"

"I am not here to answer questions; I am here to take you prisoner!"

"And who are ye that has come to take me prisoner?"

"I am the sheriff of this county!"

"Indade! Well, well, ye ought to hev brought a whole regiment, and a battery of artillery, to arrest one old man!"

"Do you surrender?"

"Well, as I don't wish to be murdered in cold blood, I don't see as I can do otherwise."

Backed by his armed posse, the sheriff advanced, and placing his hand upon faithful old Captain Mike's shoulder, said:

"You are my prisoner! I arrest you by virtue of this warrant." And the law representative exhibited a paper.

As the sheriff had placed his hand upon Captain Mike's shoulder, the latter's hound uttered a fierce growl, and would undoubtedly have



leaped at the former's throat, had not his master firmly bade him "lie still!"

The handcuffs were produced to be placed upon the prisoner's wrists, when he exclaimed: "Can ye not spare me this disgrace?"

"A murderer is entitled to no privileges!" was the stern reply.

"An' ye call me a murderer! That I should live to see this day! Here, look at this, gentlemen!" and as Captain Mike spoke he brushed back the gray hair from his brow and pointed to a scar of a deep saber cut, and then, tearing open his shirt front, he pointed to a still deeper one upon his chest, and with blazing eyes, and in a loud tone of voice, he exclaimed:

"Do these scars, won under the stars and stripes, entitle an old man to any privileges from Americans? I can show ye more, and every one of them made by enemies upon the battle-fields of me adopted country! And now, what say ye?"

"I do not know what to say," replied the sheriff, who was really a brave, kind-hearted man.

"I'm guiltless of Captain Magruder's blood. An old soldier would not murder his best friend. An' I beg that ye will spare me the disgrace of having those emblems of crime upon me wrists. Faith, gentlemen! I have scars which are an honor to me and a glory, but those things would lave a scar that would cause the blood to flare ever after in shame under me gray hairs!"

"I would rather be horsewhipped than to have been sent upon this business," said the sheriff.

"Yez can walk me between yez, wid yer guns pointed at me, if ye choose. Faith! it's not the first time that I've been between two fires, but do not put them malefactors' bonds upon me wrists!"

"I am sure, if I had my own say about the matter, I would not, but I feel that I am compelled to do it."

"Ye must put them on me, then?"

"Not that I wish to do so, but I think it is my duty."

"See here, shoot me where I stand, although I am an innocent man, but do not kill me by puttin' those things upon me!"

"We can not do that, man, we are not hangmen."

"Begorra! ye will do one thing or the other!" exclaimed Captain Mike, suddenly springing away and drawing a pistol. "Yees will hev to kill me, or promise not to put them things upon me. I can not stand them at all."

The old Irishman's movement was so sudden that no one was prepared for it, and at once the terrible alternative was presented, that they must either kill him where he stood, or take the risk of having one or more of their own number killed; and all were satisfied that the old man, when once aroused, was a determined and desperate man to cope with, despite his age.

A moment of fearful suspense followed.

Captain Mike stood, pistol in hand, in an attitude of defiance, his long gray hair thrown back upon his shoulders, and his handsome face rigid with an expression of lion-like courage and resoluteness.

The hound also assumed a warlike attitude, his bleak eyes blazing with lurid fires, as he lay crouched ready to spring at the first sign of active hostilities.

Finally the sheriff said, as one or two of his men raised their weapons:

"Hold on! don't shoot. In my heart I believe that the old soldier is innocent of this murder, and he is too noble an old fellow to be sacrificed."

One of the sheriff's posse now said:

"I don't know as it is necessary to put the handcuffs on the old man, sheriff. All your duty requires is to deliver him safe in prison."

"Can I refuse to put them on, and act in accordance with the law?"

"You certainly can."

"Then by thunder! I will take that old man's word of honor not to attempt to escape!"

"If I do, may I die a perjured scoundrel in me tracks! and I carry nineteen wounds upon me body, which I got in sixteen battles, fighting like a brave and true soldier!"

"Then consider yourself a prisoner under arrest, and on parole, until you are delivered to the custody of a jailer!"

"Ye have me pledges as an honorable man and an Irish gentleman!"

"You must surrender what articles you have on your person," said the sheriff.

"I will do that; and believing you to be a

man of honor like meself, I give ye me pistol first."

The sheriff took the weapon, and then said:

"Now, this is a disagreeable duty, but you must hand over what else you have upon your person."

"I know what yees want, the articles that I hev just recovered from this grave."

"Exactly!"

"Well, there is the watch that was once carried by me friend, Captain Magruder, as brave a youth and soldier as iver drew a sword from a scabbard."

"Then you admit that this is the watch of Captain Magruder?"

"That was his watch, and here are the spurs he wore on his boots whin I last saw him alive."

"See here, captain, it is not necessary for you to admit these facts; they may tend to criminate you."

"Divil a thing hev I to admit or conceal. I give things just as they are, and I am the man to stand to all consequences. I'd niver tell a lie to help me own case, if the rope were already about me neck."

All the articles the old man had taken from the grave were duly surrendered into the custody of the sheriff.

The latter officer then, accompanied by one or two of his posse, started with his prisoner toward the town, while the balance of the men remained, according to orders, to exhume the skeleton of the murdered man, and attend to its removal.

Once more our old hero, faithful Mike, found himself in prison, accused of the murder of Captain Magruder, the young man whom he declared that he would give his own life to save.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

ZENIE and her mother had become inured, during the past years, to affliction and sudden excitement, and the remarkable arrest of their old friend, Captain Mike, did not take them by surprise or cause them half the grief that it would had the circumstances been different.

The strange and mysterious circumstances under which the arrest had been made filled them with amazement, until they received a package from Captain Mike which explained to them certain seemingly strange circumstances, and besides, assurances that to a certain extent allayed their anxiety concerning his own ultimate fate.

We will not tire our readers by detailing the excitement that a revival of the mysterious murder created, nor the various comments that followed the arrest of old Captain Mike.

It is sufficient to say that it was intense, and the opinions as to the old soldier's guilt or innocence, as usual, were various.

One remarkable event followed the arrest.

A search warrant was granted, and in Captain Mike's apartment in the Deane mansion was found the saddle belonging to the murdered man, and also a handkerchief marked with his initials.

These discoveries appeared to stagger the faith of those who were most earnest in asserting their belief in old Captain Mike's innocence.

The day of trial speedily approached, and at last the faithful old man, covered by many honorable scars, was placed on trial for his life, for the murder of a youth whom he had claimed as his friend.

Three days passed, and the most complete chain of evidence was furnished that was ever known to have been produced to convict a suspected man of the crime of murder.

Not a link in the terrible chain of circumstantial evidence appeared to be missing.

Every fact, both important and unimportant, appeared to point unerringly toward the guilt of the prisoner.

Throughout the trial Zenie and her mother had been in constant attendance, and by their countenance and presence tried to cheer up the old hero against whom such overwhelming evidence was accumulating.

The prosecution was very skillfully conducted, the county attorney having first proved the death of Captain Magruder, and then he set about establishing a motive for his murder by the prisoner.

The motive was proven in a most extraordinary manner.

Foster Mix, the scion of an old and wealthy family, came forward as a witness, and in his cool deliberate manner testified to the startling fact that the prisoner was in love with the

affianced wife of the murdered man, and had sworn that she should be the wife of no man but him (the prisoner).

In support of this wonderfully strange testimony, the witness told the story of the interrupted ceremony between himself and Miss Deane, and swore that upon that occasion, and upon several others, Captain Carragher had declared his own love and determination to marry the young lady himself.

Much other testimony of a damaging character was furnished by this same witness, and after he had left the stand two other men swore to the same effect.

The clergyman who had sought to perform the marriage ceremony was also put upon the stand, and testified that the conduct of the prisoner, upon the day when the ceremony was interrupted, was at least very strange and remarkable, and inclined him (the witness) to accept the testimony of the disappointed groom as true.

Other witnesses came forward with the most startling and astonishing items of evidence.

One man, the same whom Captain Mike had rescued from the grip of his dog that night in the road, after the finding of the skeleton of the horse, came forward, announced as a detective.

His testimony was minute in its details, and terribly corroborative and convincing, and when the prosecution was closed, there was not one present who dreamed for a moment that the defense would be able to meet the avalanche of facts cited against the poor old gray-haired prisoner.

Throughout the trial the latter had been a quiet spectator of the whole proceedings, and judging from his pleasant, cheerful manner, few would have thought that he was the man whose life was almost run, and whom an ignominious death speedily awaited.

It was known that the defense had summoned a celebrated lawyer from New York.

The latter did not arrive until the second day of the trial.

There was great curiosity to see this famous legal light, whose reputation was world-wide.

When he entered the court, and was pointed out to the audience, a murmur of surprise pervaded the Hall of Justice.

The friends of the prisoner were very much disappointed when this great man turned out to be, in appearance, a small, spare man, quiet and undemonstrative in his bearing.

It was evident that the public had expected a large, blustering, or distinguished-looking man, whose very presence would prove a great weight in impressing the jury.

"He may turn out to be a little big man," was the consoling remark of those who were friendly to the prisoner.

Witness after witness appeared and left the witness-stand, after passing through the most commonplace and ordinary cross-examination from the great lawyer from New York.

"Bah!" was the remark from many, "the friends of the prisoner would have done much better to have secured a lawyer from Louisville, without going to the enormous expense of bringing that pale-faced Yorker on here! He don't amount to a row of pins!"

A rumor had gained credence that Miss Deane could account for the finding of the handkerchief upon the prisoner, but, to the surprise of all, no attempt was made to do so.

It was the opinion of a majority of those in the court-room that the great lawyer from the East looked upon the case as a hopeless one, and had about determined to pocket his fee and let the case go by default.

There was one man in that assemblage that did not take this view of the case.

Next to the great lawyer, this individual was the longest-headed man in that court-room.

Foster Mix, despite the terrible chain of evidence that had been established, felt uncomfortable.

He did not argue any good from this seeming apathy of the leading counsel for the defense.

Although outwardly calm and self-possessed, still inwardly he dreaded lest at any moment that little man in black might explode a bomb-shell that would set the whole theory of the prosecution flying to atoms.

Foster Mix had cause to dread this bomb-shell. His calculations were correct.

That little pale man had not moved yet.

When he did move it was to perform a legal feat that was to go upon record as the most wonderful and startling legal point that had ever dumfounded judge and jury.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

At length the case for the prosecution was all in.

It being near the hour for adjournment, it was decided that the defense should not open until the following day.

When the court opened upon the following morning, the room was crowded almost to suffocation.

Prominent among those present were the friends and relatives of the ill-fated young Magruder, who had gone out from among his kinsfolks in health and had never returned.

As a matter of course, beside the immediate friends of the prisoner, they were the most interested spectators present.

Judge, then, of their surprise, dear readers, when the little pale man, dressed in black, the defendant's counsel, arose and moved that his client be discharged, upon the ground that it had not been proven that there had been a murder committed—not even that the gallant Captain Magruder was really dead.

This startling proposition, in face of the terrible array of evidence, caused a murmur of surprise to pervade the court-room; and had not the counsel been perfectly grave and evidently in earnest it would have been thought that he was trying to perpetrate a joke.

As a matter of course, the justice returned that such a motion could not be entertained for a moment.

The district attorney also arose to his feet, and inquired with a great flourish:

"Has not the body been found? Was it not found decomposing in the very clothing worn by the man when his life was taken from him? and was not the dead man's watch, chain, and other articles known to have belonged to him, found in the same grave?"

"Why," added the attorney, "to doubt the man's death is to doubt our very presence in the court-room to-day."

"In reply to the learned prosecuting officer," replied the New York lawyer, in his usual calm and unruffled manner, "I will admit that a body was found with all the articles mentioned in the grave with it! but I claim that the body found was not the body of Captain Frank W. Magruder, an officer in the army of the United States!"

If the motion of the quiet New York lawyer had caused a sensation, this last statement caused a greater one.

In that whole court-room there were but two persons who did not display any unusual excitement, and those two were the counsel who had made the statement, and the prisoner.

In fact, the latter made a jovial remark at the very moment that this bomb-shell was exploded in the court-room.

A moment of dead silence followed, when, to the surprise still more of everybody present, the counsel for the defense called to the stand, one after the other, the very men who had exhumed the remains, and, by his questions as to what was found therein, appeared to be really damaging the cause of the prisoner.

Having obtained the testimony of these men, the counsel called a gentleman, who was well known throughout the whole county as a skillful physician and surgeon.

A remarkable question was addressed to this witness:

"What difference is there between the height of a man in life and his skeleton after death?"

The witness stated the difference as accurately as it could be determined upon the average.

"One more question," said the little lawyer in black: "Can an experienced man exactly determine from a skeleton the height of the man whose skeleton it may be?"

"To a hair," was the reply, "if the man was perfectly formed."

"That will do."

The next witness was a military gentleman.

The questions addressed to this witness were:

"Were you acquainted with Captain Magruder?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you ever attached to the same regiment with him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you keep a record of the height of every man and officer in a company and regiment?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you at present in your possession the original and official descriptive list of the officers

of the company to which Captain Magruder belonged?"

"I have."

"Will you please read, for the benefit of the court and jury, the description—the official description—of Captain Magruder?"

The witness read as requested the original army record.

When he had concluded, the lawyer said:

"Who measured Captain Magruder and made the record?"

"I did," was the answer.

"How long ago was that measurement and record made?"

"About one year ago."

"Then you are ready to swear, and do swear, that Captain Frank W. Magruder was exactly five feet eight inches and three quarters high?"

"I do."

"That will do, sir."

The next witness was the undertaker who had taken official charge of the remains during the inquest.

When this witness took the stand, the lawyer requested two respectable-looking gentlemen to rise.

When they did so, he said, addressing the witness:

"Did you ever see these gentlemen before?"

"Yes, sir."

"When and where?"

"Upon the morning after the inquest, and in the room where the remains of the murdered man lay."

"And it was really the remains of the murdered man that you pointed out to them?"

"Yes, sir."

"That will do."

The next person asked to take the stand was one of the two gentlemen whom the lawyer had asked the undertaker to identify.

When the witness was sworn, the announcement of his name was received with a flutter of surprise, as he was recognized as one of the most famous professors and anatomists in the country.

"What is your business?" came the dry, off-handed question.

"I am a professor of anatomy."

"Where?"

"In the Medical College at New York."

"You saw the remains supposed to be those of Frank W. Magruder?"

"I did."

The intensity of the interest of the audience was plainly perceptible.

Every one appeared to feel that something remarkable was about to occur, and the respect for the quiet pale-faced lawyer from New York correspondingly increased, as in the same measured tones he asked:

"Did you make an accurate measurement of those remains?"

"I did."

A moment's awful silence followed, broken at length by the clear tones of the counsel:

"What was the height of that man in life?"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"WHAT man?" came the query in reply.

"The man whose body an inquest was held over, supposing it to be the murdered remains of Captain F. W. Magruder."

There were at least three hundred people jammed in that court-room, and yet so intense was the interest in the answer of the professor-witness, that a fall of a pin might be distinctly heard.

Like a revelation, the theory of the defense had flashed over the minds of the audience, and every sense was concentrated in anticipation of his success or failure.

"Do you mean," said the witness, deliberately, "the remains that were in charge of the preceding witness?"

"I mean," said the New York lawyer, in tones so distinct and clear that they sounded like the chime of a silver bell, "the body or skeleton that has been put in evidence, or, rather, the identification thereof of the man, for the taking of whose life my client stands before this jury to be adjudged guilty or not guilty!"

Again there followed an interval of silence broken at length by the witness, who said:

"The remains over which the inquest was held were those of a man who in life could not have been less than six feet, one inch and a quarter in height!"

Upon hearing this startling reply, the pent-up excitement of the audience burst forth in a series of confused exclamations.

When order was restored, in the same deliberate manner the little pale-faced lawyer from New York asked the question:

"Is it possible for the stature of a man to increase after death?"

"No, sir!"

"That will do!"

As the witness left the stand, the counsel for the defense said, addressing the judge:

"Your honor, we claim the discharge of the prisoner on the ground that no murder has been proven!" then the lawyer added, in tones of startling significance: "The conspirators who would have perpetrated a legal murder, have produced a skeleton four inches and a quarter too long. They had probably forgotten to measure it!"

It would be impossible to depict the consternation of the judge, jury, and the prosecuting officer.

This startling *dénouement* appeared to have paralyzed the powers of speech of the judge, and the county attorney was like one suddenly stricken dumb.

By four inches and a quarter the little pale-faced lawyer from New York had distanced all the well-laid testimony of the prosecution.

There was a gap in the evidence that could not be filled.

Four links of the chain of evidence which was to convict were missing.

If the remains produced as those of Captain Magruder were really those of a man, as sworn to, over six feet in height, the whole prosecution became a farce, as it was clearly proven that Captain Magruder was less than five feet nine.

The mystery that was supposed to have been solved had become a greater mystery than ever.

The tragic story had become shadowed by startling probabilities, that filled even the most incredulous with awe. At length the judge found voice, and said:

"I shall remand the prisoner to custody until to-morrow."

"Your honor," spoke up the counsel for the defense, "every moment that Captain Carragher is held in custody, his constitutional rights as a citizen are violated. I know of no grounds whereon your honor can base your decision, when you refuse to grant my client's discharge at once!"

"I must have time to consider these startling developments; the prisoner is remanded until to-morrow!" Then, turning to the clerk of the court, his honor added: "Adjourn the court!"

Right or wrong, the will of the judge was law; further protest would have been needless, and the defense acquiesced in the will of the court.

During all of this remarkable scene, Foster Mix had sat motionless, with a face as expressionless as a sphinx.

Finally, after the adjournment, as the people passed out the man, who of all others had an interest in the death of Captain Mike, arose from his seat and passed out of the court-room like one in a dream, looking neither to the right nor the left.

Half an hour after the scene above described, Captain Mike held quite a levee in his cell.

Among the first to call upon him was the grandfather, uncle, and cousin of the man for whose murder he had been put on trial.

It was evident that these three persons, at least, accepted the fact of the old man's innocence.

They were also particularly cheerful, as the result of the trial suggested the hope that their much-loved and gallant young relative might still be living.

Colonel Magruder, the missing captain's uncle, addressing faithful old Mike, said, after having congratulated him upon the result of the trial:

"Have you the least idea, Captain Mike, as to whom the conspirators are who have concocted this villainous scheme to make you appear as the murderer of my nephew?"

"I have," was Captain Mike's quiet reply.

"Will you name them?"

"I will not."

"And why not?"

"Ye are friends and relatives of young Captain Frank?"

"We are."

"Thin ye have a right to know why I am not ready to denounce the villains, on one condition."

"And what is the condition?"

"That ye pledge yersel' on yer honor as gin-



tllemen that ye niver breathe a word of what I tell ye until ye have my permission."

"You have our pledge."

"Ye understand fully the condition—that yer not even to breathe the faintest hint of what I tell ye?"

"We understand it fully."

"Well, thin, the reason that I am not prepared to denounce the scoundrels who tried to swear my life away is, because I believe that Captain Frank is alive to-day, but in their power."

"Then it is your duty to name the men at once, and our relative can be rescued."

"The heart would prompt sich a course, but the head is agin it."

"Why?"

"Because, if the scoundrels have him so well hidden when alive, how easy it would be for them to conceal his dead body!"

"Then you think if they were denounced they would really murder him?"

"I do."

"If they have not already murdered him, why would they murder him then?"

"They would be compelled to commit the greater crime to cover up the lesser."

"What grounds have you for believing that our relative is still living?"

"I have doubted his death from the first, and I never believed him dead until I found that grave in the gully."

"How do you account for the finding of Captain Magruder's watch and other articles in that grave?"

"They were put there by the parties who buried that body, as part of the conspiracy to hang me."

"Did you know the line of defense that your counsel intended to adopt?"

"I did not. Up to the moment that he asked the question as to the length of the body produced, I thought that I was gone sure."

"Do you suspect Foster Mix of having any interest in the death of our relative?"

"Ye must draw yer own conclusions; but isn't that lawyer from New York a wonderful man?" exclaimed Mike, suddenly changing the subject.

"He is."

At this moment further conversation between the parties was interrupted by the entrance of Zenie and her mother.

The faces of both the ladies were illuminated by a spirit of thankfulness.

After the exchange of a few words of congratulations, the Magruders withdrew.

After they had gone, Zenie said:

"Well, Captain Mike, what do you think, now?"

"I'm thinkin' of but one thing, Zenie darlin'—the handkerchief with the initials on it."

## CHAPTER XXXV.

UPON the following day the proceedings in the court-room were very brief.

The identity of the body produced as Captain Magruder, with the one measured by the professors, was fully established.

Captain Mike might still have been held upon suspicion, because of the possession of the several articles belonging to the supposed murdered man, had it not been for one startling fact.

The finding of the majority of those articles with the remains of the individual who was certainly not Captain Magruder, presented, too palpably the elements of the deep-laid conspiracy to convict an innocent man.

The judge so stated, and in some extended remarks said that not a stone would be left unturned to discover the guilty parties who would have perpetrated such a fearful crime, and such a ghastly fraud upon the jury and the law officers of the county.

Captain Carragher was discharged.

Strange to relate, among the first who came forward to congratulate him upon his honorable acquittal was Foster Mix.

The latter even had the audacity to proffer his hand.

Captain Mike managed to avoid the icy grasp of the man whom he knew in his heart to be his deadliest foe, and at the same time he fastened upon him a glance, that, had he been any but the wonderfully self-possessed villain that he was, he would have wilted under.

A rush of other friends forced Foster Mix away, and thereby prevented the utterance of the stinging words that were just ready to fall from Captain Mike's lips.

The remarkable termination of the trial, as

previously stated, but deepened the mystery surrounding Captain Magruder's disappearance.

The story, as proven by the prosecution, settled one point beyond conjecture; that was, the voluntary absence of the missing man in the minds of his own friends.

There were still those among the persons the least interested who gave credence to the story that was started immediately after the conclusion of the trial, that the real conspirator was Captain Magruder himself.

"Otherwise," argued the people, "how came it that his watch, spurs, and other articles were found in the grave of the body produced?"

Despite the unreasonable supposition that Captain Magruder would sacrifice an innocent man's life merely for the purpose of covering his own clandestine flight, there were many who received this view of the mystery.

Upon one point all parties were united, the fact that the handsome old army officer was innocent of the crime for which he had been tried.

About a week subsequent to the trial, Zenie was seated upon a rustic bench under the shade of a grove of trees located about half a mile from the house.

This spot was one which she often sought when oppressed by melancholy feelings, and when she felt that nothing could relieve the pain at her heart but the solitary communion with nature.

It is said that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

If any one ever suffered from such a deference of hope, it was this beautiful girl, over whose hitherto bright life had gathered so many shadows.

Each morning as she gazed upon the rising sun, a new hope found birth in her heart, that, before that glorious luminary descended at evening below the horizon, amid its resplendent glories, that the shadows would be lifted, that the veil of mystery would be pierced, that the fearful ordeal of suspense would be finally ended.

Zenie was a brave girl, and often she remained in this lonely spot long after twilight.

Since this great trouble had come upon her she felt as though, in the words of Manfred,

"Night had become to her  
A more familiar face than that of man."

Upon the evening in question, lost in sad reverie, the beautiful girl lingered until the shadows of twilight lengthened, and were finally banished in the steady darkness of night.

Occasionally she would give utterance to her thoughts.

The wailing out of her sorrow upon the night air seemingly brought relief to her overcharged heart.

"Did I but know that he were dead," she murmured, "then could the steady light of hope burn in my heart until I, too, should leave the trials and troubles of this life beneath the clouds that would be thrown over this earthly tenement."

A deep sigh escaped from her bosom.

At the same moment there fell upon her ear a sound that caused her to start and listen.

A moment passed. All was silent and still as the grave.

Again she spoke.

"Oh, the agony of suspense! the misery of conjecture! Poor Frank! poor Frank! he may be living and suffering—suffering agonies to which mine are as shadows to the substance!"

Again she heard a sound as though some person were moving about in the near vicinity.

Zenie rose to her feet and glanced about in every direction.

The stars were forth, and glittered above the tree-tops. Even and anon the songs of the birds of night could be heard. Nature, under its star-spangled canopy, was beautiful.

We have said that Zenie was a brave girl. She was more than brave—both daring and resolute. Woman as she was, not a nerve of her delicate frame quivered at the thought of personal danger.

"Can it be possible," she muttered, "that I have had a listener to my audible musings? If so, it must have been an enemy, for no friend would avail himself of so mean an advantage."

In a firm voice she called:

"Is there any person about here?"

No answer came to her bold query, and no sound broke the stillness but the sighing of the wind through the trees.

"Can it be," muttered Zenie, "that in my nervous condition my imagination is playing me strange freaks?"

Again she resumed her seat and her musings,

when, for the third time, she heard a sound like the tread of human feet over dry leaves.

Satisfied that her imagination had not deceived her, she rose to her feet and advanced in the direction of the sound, carefully scanning to see if there was anybody near.

She failed to discover the slightest indication of the presence of any one, and had just determined to return toward home, when she was startled by hearing a singularly mournful voice exclaim:

"Zenie!"

Her heart beat wildly, a sudden glorious hope swelled in her bosom.

She listened, and after a moment again came the call:

"Zenie!"

The beautiful girl looked in every direction, but saw no one.

At length she exclaimed:

"Who calls?"

"It is I!" came the answer.

"Where are you?" cried Zenie, "I see no one."

"I am here."

There was no mistake in the direction from whence the last reply came.

Zenie raised her eyes, and there, standing on a line with the thicket, at the summit of a little hillock, and but dimly revealed, was a human form.

The excited girl strained her eyes as though by a glance she could turn darkness into light. At length a single cry burst from her lips:

"Oh, heavens! it's Frank!"

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

As the figure stood revealed to her, Zenie's first impression was to rush forward, and throw herself upon the bosom of her lover.

A sudden, strange thought restrained her; a cold chill trembled over her frame; her eyes dilated, and she stood like one transfixed.

There stood the figure motionless.

It was undoubtedly Captain Frank, and yet there was something so strange and weird in the form, that she was held amazed and speechless.

The figure—whether flesh and blood or an apparition from the grave—wore the same military uniform that had graced the form of her affianced when she had last seen him, upon that fatal night when he had started for Louisville.

An unearthly pallor gave his rigid features the strange appearance that caused her to stand and tremble, instead of rushing to throw herself into his arms.

Even in that terrible moment Zenie recognized the fact that the form of her beloved was hatless, otherwise he was precisely as she had seen him last in life—save the hat.

The latter, she remembered, all blood-stained as it was, was still in her possession.

This fact, as above described, shot through her mind like a flash, even while the sound of her own cry trembled upon her ears.

In a voice whose tones were so strange that they pierced the girl's heart, the query fell from the lips of the figure:

"Zenie, do you recognize me?"

"I do! Oh! Frank, Frank, why do you stand there, so still and motionless? Why do you not come to me?"

"Have I not come?"

"But you do not seem like my Frank—and you have been gone so long. Why am I not clasped in your arms? Why do I not feel your kiss pressed upon my brow, as in days gone by?"

"Dear one, I could not clasp thee in my arms because I would not chill your warm blood by catching thee in the cold embrace of the dead."

"Oh! Frank, Frank, what is the meaning of these strange words?" and Zenie moved as though to advance toward him; when, with a warning gesture the apparition motioned her back, and said:

"Zenie, do not approach me! I have left my grave to keep a tryst with thee; but come not near lest the damp of the grave sicken thee!"

"Oh! Frank, Frank, do I hear aright? Do I but behold thy spirit?"

"Be strong, Zenie, and listen! I am no more numbered with the living, and when I have fulfilled the purpose which brought me from my narrow bed of earth, I shall return and wait for thee."

"And am I standing face to face with the dead?"

"Darling, be strong; you are."



"Frank, one question. What befell thee on the night when last we parted in life?"

"I was shot down like a dog—murdered!"

"Who did this foul deed?"

"I almost fear to tell thee, dear one; but canst thou not guess?"

"Upon whom should I dare to lay so foul a charge?"

"Fear not, but speak."

"I can think of but one who bore thee a hatred so terrible as to desire thy death."

"Name him."

Zenie cast a furtive glance around in every direction.

Her face was as pale and as rigid as that of the apparition, and a looker-on might have guessed that they were two truants from the grave holding a ghostly conversation.

At length in tones filled with horror, Zenie said:

"Whom could I suspect but my cousin, who hated and threatened thee?"

"You mean Foster Mix?"

"I do."

"Zenie, Foster Mix is as innocent of my blood as the babe unborn."

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Zenie, "and have we all so cruelly wronged him during these months?"

"If you believed him guilty of my death, you did."

"You have appeared to me Frank, to communicate something that made these restless in thy grave?"

"I have."

"What have you to tell me?"

"Can you bear a terrible revelation?"

"I have become inured to terrible revelations, to startling incidents, to soul-harrowing scenes, if not I could not converse thus calmly with thee."

"And could you condemn the murderer, whoever he might be?"

"Think you I could hold friendship for a murderer?"

"Would you aid in bringing him to justice?"

"Would I seek to shield a man who had your blood upon his hands?"

"Suppose it should prove to be one whom you have hitherto respected and loved?"

"Why try me thus? Why not name the murderer?"

"Because I would prepare thee for the revelation I am about to make."

"It may be better that I should never know," said Zenie after a moment.

"It is necessary for thine own safety that you should know whose treacherous hand it was that struck me down, but before making my disclosure I have a few words to say, and despite your prejudice, I beseech thee heed them, for they are words of the dead; as I love thee, I would not have thee be unjust!"

"To whom have I been unjust?"

"Your cousin."

"Foster Mix?"

"Yes."

"In what manner?"

"By believing him insincere regarding the story of your parentage, and by believing him in any way responsible for the act which sent me to my grave."

It would be impossible to relate the strange emotions that agitated Zenie upon hearing these strange words.

Despite the evidence of her eyes while beholding the form of her lover standing within a few yards of her, still a faint suspicion flashed across her mind.

She did not doubt that she was conversing with a ghostly apparition, but wonderful as the thought was, a suspicion did flash over her that some evil spirit may have assumed the form of her dead lover, to deceive her, and aid that wicked man, her cousin.

The question that fell from her lips betrayed her suspicion to her ghostly visitor as she said:

"Art thou really the spirit of Frank Magruder?"

"I am."

"Then name the man who is guilty of thy death."

"On one condition."

"What is that condition?"

"That you hold my murderer responsible for his crime, whoever it may be."

"I could not do otherwise."

"I was slain treacherously by a supposed friend."

"Speak! Who was thy murderer?"

"That silver-haired, smooth-tongued old ras-

cal, who, like a reptile, warms himself at your mother's fireside, Captain Mike Carragher!"

As these words fell from the lips of the apparition, in thunder tones came the exclamation:

"Be ye ghost, goblin, or devil, yer a liar to yer teeth!"

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

As the words just quoted fell upon Zenie's startled ears, the form of Captain Mike, bare-headed, and with his long, silver hair streaming upon his shoulders, broke through the thicket, and stood revealed under the starlight.

A faint scream burst from Zenie's lips.

A moment of silence passed.

Captain Mike had stepped beside Zenie, and stood facing the apparition of Captain Magruder.

A movement became apparent on the part of the latter, as though the ghostly visitant was about to depart, when Captain Mike exclaimed:

"Hold on, Mither Ghost! I don't allow no man, from above ground or under it, ter slander me. Ye said I was a murderer, and I say ye're a liar! Now, thin, Mither Ghost, if ye take that, ye're no man!"

The ghostly figure raised its hand, and in an awe-inspiring manner, waved it, motioning Captain Mike to begone.

"Oh, ye can wave yer hand until yer skeleton arm snaps in twain, for me to clear out! but divil a step am I goin'—or you aither, for that matter—until ye take back the lie ye jist told this poor girl!"

As Mike spoke, the click of the lock of a pistol might be heard; at the same time the resolute old man drew a bead on the ghost, and said:

"Now, see here—I'm a dead shot, and I have a dead bead on the spot where yer heart ought ter be! Now, if ye're nothing but a rack o' bones, it will make no difference; but if ye're not, and make wan move to go away, troth, I'll make a ghost of ye, sure!"

A brief interval of silence followed. The apparition stood motionless, as did Captain Mike, with his leveled pistol in his hand.

"Now, thin, Mither Ghost," at length said Mike, "since ye have concluded to remain a bit, ye will please tell me who put it inter yer skull that I murdered me frind?"

The ghost made no answer to this pointed inquiry, when Captain Mike again exclaimed:

"Come, come, Mither Skeleton—ye had plenty of tongue a moment ago, if ye are only a rack o' bones; and now I'll give ye jist ten seconds ter take back the lie ye told, or by the powers! I'll fire and rattle up some o' yer bones, anyhow!"

"Don't shoot!" exclaimed the ghost.

"By the powers! ye've found yer tongue, have ye? And it strikes me ye're mighty 'fraid of gittin' shot for a man that's been dead and buried onst!"

The ghost made a step backward, and Mike cried out:

"Howld on, now! Begorra, ye're not a-goin' to git away by walking off! If ye'll vanish into thin air, I'll forgive ye, but divil a fut shall ye stir!"

We have said that Zenie was a girl of remarkable nerve. She was, and the very moment of Mike's appearance the truth flashed upon her mind that, aided by the excited state of her nerves, and the weird surroundings, she was being imposed upon.

If her own keenness had not warned her of this fact, the next words of the gallant old Captain Mike would have convinced her, as the old man turned toward her and said:

"Troth, Zenie darlin', ye needn't have one bit of fear. The grave was never dug that that chap in stolen clothes was iver put in; but by the powers! the grave-diggers will have a job shortly if he doesn't open his mug and tell who sint him around here masquerading as a ghost!"

While addressing Zenie, Captain Mike had involuntarily turned toward her. The apparition appeared to be pretty keen-sighted, as, taking advantage of this momentary off-guardedness of the old Irishman, it dashed away.

Bang! bang! Captain Mike let drive with his pistol, at the same time rushing forward; but by the time he had reached the spot where the ghost had lately stood, the latter had disappeared from sight.

"Begorra!" muttered Mike, "I wish I had the dog here, and I'd put him on a ghost hunt."

Returning to Zenie's side, the old man continued:

"Well, Zenie, darlin', did ye iver see the beatin' o' that? Faith it was only my tender

heartedness that I didn't give that grave-yard duck a shot when I first set my eyes on him."

"How did you happen to be on hand so opportunely, Captain Mike?"

"Faith! child, I haven't been a hundred yards from ye since nightfall."

"Then it was your step that I heard?"

"Do ye mean at the time when ye called, 'Who's there?'"

"Yes."

"Faith! then, 'twas me; but, by the powers, now wasn't this a strange method them fellows took to play upon your moind; but say, darlin', if I hadn't happened to come around, would ye have belaved that foul lie?"

"No, Captain Mike, I would not."

"And ye would have doubted a message from the grave?"

"I think that charge would have led me to suspect the character of my informant."

"Faith! but yer a brave good girl; but there's one thing I'd have ye mind. I've towld ye all along there was danger in yer goin' about alone."

"Who would suspect that I would be confronted by a ghost!"

"Faith! yer right there; but that wasn't the danger that I was anticipatin'."

"What did you fear?"

"That the same villains who had abducted Captain Frank might attempt the same thing with you, and that's why I kept myself upon yer track every time that ye went forth from the house."

"Have you any suspicion who that individual was who attempted to play the ghost?"

"Faith I have; but come, me child, we'll be goin' toward home, and ye must promise me niver to go out alone agin until this matter is cleared up, and Captain Frank is rescued."

There was a path which led directly from the grove, where the startling scenes above related occurred, to a point in the road directly opposite the entrance to the grounds surrounding the Deane mansion.

Captain Mike and Zenie followed this path, and as they proceeded along through the woods the latter said:

"Do you suppose that Foster Mix was at the bottom of this singular affair that has just occurred?"

"Who else could be at the bottom of it?"

"What object could he have?"

"The use of any means to destroy me."

"Why is he so bitter against you?"

"I have just discovered this day: the scoundrel has learned it's my evidence that will prove him a perjurer and a conspirator when the great trial comes off."

"Then it is not safe for you to remain around these parts. You'd better go away until the danger is past."

The old man laughed outright upon receiving this advice; at the same time he said:

"Ye nade have no fear concerning me, Zenie darlin'; and furthermore, if I knew that I was to be murdered in the end, I wouldn't stir a foot until I had succeeded in rescuing Captain Frank from the cowardly clutches of Foster Mix."

"If Captain Frank has not already been murdered, don't you fear that they may yet kill him?"

"Not now; although a word has not been breathed against Foster Mix in public, the scoundrel well knows that he is suspected, and that he's bein' watched."

"I think that Captain Frank is safe, because his captor dare not kill him!"

"You appear to be confident that Foster Mix holds him a prisoner."

"Do you recollect about the handkerchief, Zenie?"

"I do."

"Well, that suggests something, does it not?"

"Yes."

"Did you observe anything peculiar about that ghost?"

"Everything was peculiar about him."

"Exactly, darlin'; but there was one thing particularly strange: that scoundrel wore the very clothing which were upon Captain Magruder when I parted with him at the turn of the road upon that fatal night not many months ago."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AN hour before midnight, upon the same day when Zenie encountered the pretended ghost in the grove, a tall, slender man might have been



seen pacing to and fro the drawing-room of a modern-built and pretentious-looking house.

The restless walker was Foster Mix.

We propose to introduce our readers to this bad man in his own home.

It was a noble estate that had been left to him, and had he been a prudent man, he would have had no reason to contrive a scheme to rob his cousin of her inheritance.

Under the calm exterior, Foster Mix had a vice which had financially destroyed him, and which was his ruling passion.

He was an inveterate gambler.

The love of gaming had become an insanity.

Through the indulgence of this vice during many years, he had wasted his substance, and his noble estate was burdened with mortgages, the interest of which claimed every dollar of his income, and more.

He was a remarkable man—remarkable in his vices.

He thought himself the soul of honor, because he had never failed to meet a gambling obligation.

His vice had converted him into a moral monstrosity.

By degrees he had become hardened and corrupted, until he was ready to resort to any crime so long as it might be committed under cover, to obtain money to gratify his vicious habit.

Upon the night when we find him pacing the floor of the drawing-room, as described, his usual reserve was thrown off, and, as he walked, inaudibly muttering, he would occasionally give utterance to the thoughts which agitated him.

"Hang it!" he exclaimed, as, after walking to a table and tossing off a glass of brandy, he clinched his slender fingers, and continued: "That infernal old man appears to be protected by an invulnerable armor. Every way that I turn he is there to baffle me! By Jove! I shouldn't be surprised if this very night Radway should return, and bring me tidings that this last desperate scheme had been foiled by that old gray-haired marplot!"

Thus alternately walking, drinking, muttering, and cursing, he passed the time, until long after midnight, when suddenly his attention was attracted by hearing the sound of horse's feet, as some horseman came galloping up toward the house.

"That's Radway!" he muttered; "now I'll know whether I have been successful in this last move, or foiled again."

An instant later the room door opened, and a young man in the undress uniform of an army officer entered.

"Well," said Foster Mix, eagerly, "what tidings do you bring? Was it a success or a failure?"

"A success up to a certain point, but in the end a disastrous failure!"

"Tell me the story."

The girl came forth as usual, and occupied her seat on the old rustic chair in the grove, where she remained until after dark; circumstances all proved favorable, and at the proper moment the form of Captain Magruder appeared suddenly before her.

"Was she impressed with the belief that it was really her lover?"

"Yes; my make-up must have been perfect; my appearance deceived her, and she did not for a moment seem to doubt the fact of my being her lover returned from the grave."

"Did she faint or scream?"

"Neither; she was as cool and self-possessed as though she had met a friend in a drawing-room."

"She's a wonderful girl! Would to Heaven I had led a different life and could have won her love. Go on with your story."

"There is little more to be told. From my ghostly lips I told her of your innocence."

"Well, well?" said Foster Mix, eagerly; "did she appear inclined to believe it?"

"There wasn't much chance to doubt it, as your exculpation was believed to have fallen from the lips of the murdered man."

"And then you named the real murderer?"

"I did."

"How did she receive that statement?"

"Before she had a chance to express herself one way or the other, your ghost was pronounced a liar in the richest Irish brogue that ever fell from mortal lips!"

"What! that Captain Mike was there?"

"He was there as though he were the apparition, and had suddenly risen from the ground to confront me."

"And were you detected?"

"Well—a—as far as my ghostliness was con-

cerned, I was in the most effective manner possible."

"And how?"

"By being informed that there was a pistol aimed at the place where my heart ought to be, and if I moved a step, I'd be investigated by a pistol-ball."

"And how did you finally escape?"

"Well, the old man turned to tell the girl that I was a warm-blooded ghost, and I improved the opportunity to vanish!"

"Were you followed?"

"Yes; by a couple of pistol-balls."

"And you escaped unhurt?"

"Fortunately I did; but I believe only because that silver-haired old cuss didn't really want to kill me."

"Well, you give the old scoundrel credit for mercy that he doesn't know."

"Not I, Foster Mix. I tell you that old man is the greatest old hero I ever met! After to-night, I'd think twice before I'd hurt him!"

"You've got no business to think, Radway Mead!" said Foster Mix, as the usual cruel smile played around his thin lips.

"Oh, yes, I have a right to think! I have come to the conclusion that I ain't so bad a man after all."

"Good or bad, you belong to me as much as one of my slaves!"

"Not I!"

"Then you belong to the sheriff."

"I think after certain recent transactions, it doesn't become you to taunt me, Foster Mix! I'm not lending you my talents through fear; I'm only acting as your instrument for the promised pay."

"You always found me an honest man, didn't you, Radway Mead?"

"In money matters, yes; and you must remember that it was my own honorable discharge of gambling debts that made me a beggar, and subsequently a forger!"

"I'm almost a beggar now. If they should come down upon me with one of those mortgages, I'd own nothing but the suit of clothes on my back!"

"That's pretty hard papers!"

"If that man, Captain Carragher, was out of the way, nothing earthly could prevent my stepping into half a million at the death of my Aunt Deane, and there ain't any insurance company in the country that would take a risk on her existence."

Radway Mead, who bore a singular resemblance to Captain Magruder, as far as height, color of hair, and eyes were concerned, paced the floor for a moment, and then finally stopping in front of Foster Mix, he said:

"Is that how the case stands? This old man stands between you and half a million?"

"That's just exactly where he stands."

"If he was removed from your path, it would be a sure thing, you're getting this money?"

"A sure thing! His removal, or the death of the girl, would put me in possession of half a million!"

"How much would I get, after you got the money?"

"One tenth of it!"

"It's a desperate chance, but there's one way that it might be done without risk, as far as the law is concerned!"

"How is that?"

"The old man might be provoked into a duel."

"And then?"

"You know that I'm a dead shot."

For a moment the two men gazed into each other's eyes. Finally, Foster Mix said:

"That might work! Try it!"

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

A WEEK passed, when a rumor spread throughout the neighborhood that Mrs. Deane and her daughter, accompanied by the old man, Captain Mike, had gone north to the city of New York.

Foster Mix was sitting upon the porch of his house, and Radway Mead came and told him of this fact.

"Then our game is effectually blocked!" was the baffled villain's reply. After a moment he inquired:

"Are you sure that this story is true?"

"There is no doubt of it."

"When did they go?"

"The day following my little game of ghost."

"Then they have been gone nearly a week?"

"Yes."

"Strange! I wonder if it is possible that they have turned the tables on me?"

"How could they turn the tables on you?"

"Easily enough, if they have ascertained my financial condition."

"What suggests that idea to you?"

"The fact of the letter I received to-day."

"Where from?"

"New York."

"What has that letter to do with them?"

"Of a certainty, I do not know that it has anything to do with them; but there is a possibility that they are at the bottom of it."

"If I am to know anything about it, you must explain yourself, and I may be able to assist you in coming to a conclusion."

"The man who holds the principal mortgage upon my estate is a northern man, and resides in New York."

"Well?"

"To-day I received a letter from him, stating that the mortgagee must be satisfied, or that he would proceed to foreclose. Let one proceed, and I'll have them all down upon me. According to the letter, an agent is already on his way here to set matters in motion."

"Well, I suppose you can't do anything until this man presents himself?"

"I can not."

"Have you any plans?"

"Yes; a bonus may stave off the foreclosure for six months."

"Well, that will give us time to move."

Another week passed, and one afternoon Foster Mix had just returned from a gallop, when he was informed that a gentleman awaited him in his study.

"Hang it! I suppose it is the agent of the New York man!" muttered Foster Mix, as he proceeded to enter the room where the stranger awaited him.

Upon opening the door and entering his study, he beheld a young man seated there; the latter's appearance was very peculiar.

He appeared to be a man of about thirty years of age, with yellow hair, blue eyes, and a beardless face.

As Foster Mix entered the room and met the stranger's glance, an undefinable feeling of oppression settled upon his spirits.

One look satisfied him that he had never seen the stranger before, and yet there was something strangely familiar in the presence of the latter.

In manners, Foster Mix was always a gentleman, and addressing his strange-looking guest, he said:

"You have business with me, sir?"

"Yes, sir; I represent Mr. Dale of New York," replied the stranger, in a shrill piping tone of voice, and with an Irish accent.

Foster Mix started nervously upon recognizing the tinge of brogue that characterized the accent of his guest.

He eyed the latter sharply, but his glance was returned by one of almost stolid indifference.

A moment's awkward silence followed, when Foster Mix at length said:

"Have you full authority to act for Mr. Dale?"

"I have."

"What proposition does he offer through you?"

"The payment, in full, of the mortgage."

"Are your instructions imperative on that point?"

"That depends upon circumstances."

"Well, sir," said Foster Mix, "I must have time to think over this sudden demand."

"That's reasonable, sir; when shall I wait upon you again?"

"Not sooner than day after to-morrow."

During this brief colloquy, Foster Mix had keenly surveyed the stranger from head to foot. Had he been a man who exercised less control over the expression of his face, the suspicion that agitated him would have been depicted thereon.

As it was, not the least sign indicated that he, for an instant, suspected but what the man in his presence was precisely what he represented himself to be.

The stranger arose, as though about to take his departure, and Foster Mix said:

"I am sorry that I can not offer you accommodations under my roof, but certain circumstances deprive me of the privilege of inviting you to remain as my guest."

"I'm thankful, sir, just the same as though you were able to inthertain me, but I could not accept your hospitality even if you were in a position to offer it."



A moment later Foster Mix accompanied the stranger to the porch.

As the latter mounted his horse, and slowly rode down the bordered pathway, toward the road, Radway Mead stepped out upon the piazza, and Foster Mix said, in a low, guarded voice:

"Look at that man—see how he sits upon that horse."

"Who is he?" asked Radway.

"He is the lawyer's clerk from New York," was the reply.

"He doesn't sit on a horse like a law-student."

"I don't believe he ever saw a law-book beyond the binding. That man's used to the saddle."

While they stood watching him, the horseman had reached the great gate opening out into the road.

Leaping from the saddle he opened the gate, led his horse through, and remounted without the least effort.

"Did you see that?" said Mix.

"Yes."

"That man dismounts and mounts as though he had been used to doing it to the tap of the drum."

"What do you suspect?" asked Radway Mead.

"I hardly dare say!" and a cold, cruel smile played around the man's mouth, while a threatening light gleamed in his eyes.

"You suspect something?"

"I do."

"Why not tell me what you suspect?"

"Because I want to be assisted by your shrewdness."

"How can I assist you?"

"By following that man and watching his movements, without being seen yourself."

"What difference does it make whether he sees me or not; as he did not see me here, he would not be apt to recognize me."

"If he is the person whom I believe him to be, he would recognize you."

"How far do you think the chase will lead me?"

"Probably as far as the Deane place."

"Ah! ah! do your suspicions run that way?"

"Follow him and see what suspicions his movements may arouse in your mind."

Quarter of an hour after the departure of the stranger, Radway Mead was in the saddle, and riding in the same direction taken by the man who had represented himself as the agent of Mr. Dale, of New York.

Foster Mix remained standing upon the porch until his emissary had disappeared from sight, when he turned and entered the house, with the muttered remark:

"Tis as I thought! This is to be a nicely played game. Mr. Dale's agent must be a brave chap, to run his head into the lion's jaw. But we'll see! I'm an old gamester, and if I don't win with the cards I have seen in the hand of my antagonist, I'm a poor player, indeed."

In the meantime the man from New York pursued his way, probably not dreaming that there was one on his track who would not hesitate at a murder!

## CHAPTER XL.

THE window-panes of the Deane mansion shone red in the rays of the setting sun, when a mounted stranger turned in through the broad gate, and rode up toward the entrance to the house.

Halting before the steps leading up to the broad piazza, he dismounted, and waited for one of the stable-boys to come and take charge of his horse.

The new arrival was the same yellow-headed, blue-eyed, squeaky-voiced man, who had presented himself to Foster Mix as the agent of the latter's creditor in New York.

It was but a moment before a negro came around to take charge of his horse, when the man ascended the steps and rang the front-door bell.

The signal was answered by a plain-looking woman, to whom the stranger handed a letter.

The woman glanced over the communication, when she said:

"You are welcome, Mr. O'Farrell, in the name of my mistress," and an invitation was added for him to enter.

It was still twilight when Mr. O'Farrell issued forth from the house, and leisurely sauntered around toward the stables.

Passing into the stable-yard, he was moving toward the kennel, where Captain Mike's blood-

hound was chained, when one of the negroes called out to him:

"Hold on dar', boss, don't go near dat ar houn' dar; he ain't oberfond of strangers no time, and, golly! he's offal savage jis 'bout now."

"What makes him particularly savage just about now?" asked Mr. O'Farrell.

"Well, ye see, massa, dat dog's massa am away now—he's gone Norf to New York; dat's why de dog am berry bad jis now."

O'Farrell took two or three steps toward the dog, when the beast protruded his head from the kennel, and fastening his red eyes upon the stranger uttered a low, fierce growl.

"Better mind dar, massa!" exclaimed the negro. "I tell ye if yer go foolin' 'roun dar yer run a mighty good chance of bein' chewed up!"

"Begorra! it sounds like it."

Upon hearing the stranger make this remark, the fierce-looking beast bounded out of his kennel, and, instead of a fierce growl, began to whine and bark nervously, at the same time exhibiting signs of unusual excitement.

"Better go 'way from dar, massa," said the negro; "dat ar dog am gettin' furious, an' bime-by he get in tantrums—he's jist gwine to snap dat iron chain in two and chaw yer."

"See here, boy," said O'Farrell. "I'll lay ye a wager now that I go up and I'll pat that dog on the head, and he'll niver offer to hurt me in the last!"

"Whar'd you come from, massa?"

"From New York."

"Ef yer eber want to go back dar 'gin, don't go foolin' 'roun dat ar houn', I tell yer."

"See here, now, boy, devil a fear have I of the hound;" and as O'Farrell spoke he advanced straight to the kennel, when the fierce beast, instead of chawing him up, sprung out and placed his great paws upon his shoulders, and rubbed his large, black nose against him, at the same time wagging his tail, and evincing unequivocal feelings of delight.

"Golly massa, dis yer chile neber seed nuffin like dat afore! Who be yer? 'Pears dat ar dog seems to know yer!"

"Well, he knows that I'm a frind of his master's."

Upon receiving this reply, the negro gave a start, and then advancing close to O'Farrell, gazed scrutinizingly into his face, and finally remarked:

"I neber seed you afore, massa, but 'pears like I's heard yer voice afore now."

"Faith, may be that's because I'm an Irishman, like the dog's master."

"May be dat's so, massa."

While this singular scene was transpiring between O'Farrell and the dog, the figure of a man was crouching behind the cattle-shed.

The latter appeared to be deeply interested in the movements of O'Farrell, and particularly anxious to hear every word that fell from his lips.

In his eagerness to listen, he leaned forward in such a manner that he came under the ray of the rising moon, and his shadow was thrown upon the side of the barn.

O'Farrell, who was still conversing with the negro, happened to turn about, and his eye fell upon the shadow thrown against the side of the barn.

Upon recognizing this indication of the presence of a listener, O'Farrell gave a slight start, but instantly afterward continued the conversation, in a louder tone of voice, without betraying, with the least movement, that he was aware of the presence of an eavesdropper.

Picking up a stake from the ground, the stranger changed his position so that he brought himself between the negro and the shadow upon the barn; then leaning carelessly upon the stake, but with his glance fixed over the other's shoulder, so that it rested upon the shadow, he said, in a loud voice:

"See here, boy, wouldn't it be a good idea to let the dog loose to have a run?"

"Dunno 'bout dat, massa. Captain Carragher didn't leab no orders 'bout dat."

"Well, the captain's a friend of mine, and I reckon I can take the responsibility of lettin' the dog have a run."

As the stranger spoke, he managed to strike the chain with the stake, so that it clanked, and like a flash the shadow on the barn vanished.

"Begorra! I thought so," remarked O'Farrell, in a low tone of voice.

"What yer t'ought, massa?"

"That I'd let the dog loose," was the reply of O'Farrell, as he unclasped the chain from the hound's collar.

The moment the dog was freed, he pranced around for a second or two, and then dropped directly in front of O'Farrell and looked up intelligently in the latter's face, as though waiting for a command.

"Go find!" said the stranger, in a tone of voice that caused the negro's eyes to roll in amazement.

Swinging around and sniffing with his nose to the ground, the hound moved directly toward the corner of the cattle-shed where the figure of the man had been crouching.

The stranger followed him.

Arrived at the corner of the shed, the hound circled for a moment, and uttering a low bark, bounded away, followed swiftly by O'Farrell.

"Golly!" cried the negro, upon beholding these singular movements, "dat beats dis yer chile! Dat am de bery strangest performance I eber seed, sartin shuah! Dat am a werry mysterious man, dat am! May be he was de bery debil hisself!"

Our readers are aware that when the agent from New York rode away from the house of Foster Mix, he had been followed, a few minutes after his departure, by Radway Mead.

They will recollect, also, that the latter's instructions were to watch the stranger's movements.

Radway Mead was a reckless and desperate man; a person who, from his youth upward, had been under evil influences. Unfortunately for himself, he had been left an orphan at an early age, without a near relative in the world, and the age of twenty-four found him a bad, dangerous, penniless man.

The noble patrimony that had been left to him had been squandered in riotous living or gambled away.

His condition at the time he was introduced to our readers was such that he was prepared to execute any villainy for a price.

His education, handsome personal appearance, and fine natural abilities, combined with reckless personal courage, made him a very dangerous rascal.

Upon starting in pursuit of O'Farrell he had contrived to keep upon the latter's track without being himself observed.

Foster Mix's prediction proved correct—the agent had ridden directly toward the Deane mansion.

When the New York man had presented his letter of introduction to the housekeeper, Radway Mead had been a witness of the act.

After the stranger had disappeared from the house, his pursuer drove into the thicket lining the road, and picketed his horse.

From that time until the reappearance of O'Farrell, Radway Mead had been prowling about the grounds, dodging from covert to covert, waiting for something to turn up.

While the conversation was passing between the negro and O'Farrell at the dog's kennel, it was Mead who crouched behind the cattle-shed.

He had heard every word that had passed; what his conclusions were will be detailed in future chapters.

It was the suggestion to loose the hound that first warned him of his danger, and urged the necessity of his instantly leaving.

## CHAPTER XLI.

RADWAY MEAD was a southern man, and well understood the keen scent of a blood-hound to track a human being.

He knew the moment the dog was released his presence would be discovered.

He did not fear the fierce hound, as he was well armed, and a dead shot, but it did not suit his purpose to be discovered.

Moving swiftly along, and satisfied with the information he had obtained at present, he proceeded to where his horse was picketed, and springing into the saddle, was about to dash away, when the hound burst through the thicket.

Quick as a flash his pistol was drawn, and in an instant poor Tiger's career would have been terminated, when just as the hound was ready to spring upon him, a halloo was heard, which caused the beast to spring back into the thicket and run away, while Radway Mead urged his horse forward out upon the road, and putting spurs to him, dashed away at a furious gallop.

O'Farrell caught just a glimpse of his flying figure as he disappeared down the road, when he muttered, with a low chuckle:

"Begorra, but I'm a poor masquerader, or else Foster Mix has the keenness of the devil hisself! Faith, I've lost my silver locks, which were the honor of an old man, and assumed



this dirty yellow wig for nothing at all, only to be laughed at; but, by the powers, I'll stick to me uniform now that I've put it on!"

Having thus delivered himself, William O'Farrell, or Captain Mike, as our readers have already discovered, led his hound back to his kennel, and re-entered the house.

In the meantime Radway Mead had reached the home of his employer, Foster Mix.

The latter had awaited the return of his tool, and the moment the study door was closed behind them, the eager question came:

"Well, Mead, you've discovered something. What is it?"

"I've discovered that that agent from New York is in disguise."

"I came to that conclusion the moment my eyes fell upon him," replied Foster Mix. "Now, then, that we know that he is in disguise, the question is, who is he?"

Radway Mead related all that had occurred since his departure, minutely detailing the scene with the dog.

After he had concluded his relations, Foster Mix remained silent and thoughtful for awhile, and at length said:

"It's a deep game that's being played against me, and that infernal Captain Mike is the brains at the bottom of it."

"You are unquestionably right there."

"Now, then, the question is, how to block this game?"

"It can't be blocked as long as that Irishman is above ground."

"And yet he appears to be determined to stay above ground. If any man ever bore a charmed life that old graybeard does."

For some moments both men were silent.

The situation had become very desperate.

It was necessary to resort to desperate chances to prevent utter ruin.

Finally Radway Mead broke the silence by asking:

"What do you think of this mortgage business?"

"I think that that mortgage is intended to serve as a bribe for me to confess that the Hepsy Doane story is a lie; in fact, it is the mess of pottage I am to receive in lieu of the inheritance of General Deane."

"You mean that the ultimate proposition will be, that you shall receive that mortgage, and suddenly discover that Hepsy Doane was false, or that payment will be pressed and you will be ruined?"

"Exactly!"

"Do you suppose that this Irishman has that mortgage in his possession?"

"Probably he has."

Again both men were silent; their countenances were ghastly, betraying the fact that the same murderous thoughts agitated both their brains.

A second time Radway Mead was the one to break the silence by asking:

"Wouldn't it be easy to play off that we do not recognize this man?"

"I am determined upon that course, under any circumstances."

"When he makes his proposition, can't you accept it?"

"Accept twenty-five thousand for more than half a million?"

"You understand me; can't you pretend to accept it?"

"What object would I gain by that?"

"This man would bring the mortgage with him here."

"Well, what then?"

"Couldn't it be arranged that he never take it away with him?"

"That plan would answer, provided one thing should happen."

"What is that?"

"Dead men tell no tales."

"Everything hangs on the death of this man?"

"Everything."

"You get him to bring the mortgage here, and I'll promise that he tells no tales afterward."

"But how will I get possession of the mortgage?"

"At the muzzle of a pistol."

"Captain Carragher is a man that 'don't scare."

For two hours these two bad men remained together.

When they separated, after canvassing a dozen different plans, one was adopted so villainous and disbolical in its nature that none but men with the nature of fiends could ever have conceived it.

According to appointment, upon the second day following his first visit, Mr. Dale's agent from New York presented himself a second time at the home of Foster Mix.

The latter was there to receive him, and no one would have dreamed, from his courteous manners, the foul wrong he meditated against the apparently unsuspecting man, whose hand he grasped with seeming friendship.

After the interchange of a few ordinary remarks, Foster Mix said:

"Well, sir, provided I am not prepared to pay that mortgage, what proposition are you prepared to make?"

"The proposition should come from you!" was the business-like reply.

"If payment for that mortgage is pressed, it will ruin me."

"That's unfortunate for you."

"Are you prepared to accept one half of the amount and renew the mortgage for the other half?"

"No, sir."

An awkward silence followed this brief reply, when, urged by a strange impulse, Foster Mix said, at length, at the same time fastening a meaning glance upon the agent:

"What interest has my aunt, Mrs. Deane, in the foreclosure of this mortgage?"

If Foster Mix had calculated that this abrupt question would confuse the man he had to deal with, he was sadly mistaken.

The cool reply that he received was:

"Probably your relations with your aunt make ye a better guesser concerning that matter than meself."

Foster Mix arose from his seat, went to his study window, lowered the sash and drew the curtain. He then deliberately turned the key in the study door, and resumed his seat.

During these suspicious movements the other man did not betray the slightest concern.

Not a muscle upon his face, or the slightest change of color, betrayed either suspicion or alarm.

As Foster Mix resumed his seat at the center-table, directly opposite and facing his guest, he said:

"As our business is important and secret, a little precaution is necessary."

"Yer right!" was the reply.

Foster Mix fastened a keen glance upon the other, remarking, in a significant tone:

"We'll now proceed to business!"

"Ye'll find me ready!" was the answer.

"Then," said Foster Mix, "to avoid any misunderstanding, let me tell you that I have penetrated your disguise!"

#### CHAPTER XLII.

"Ye have?" was the quiet reply.

"Yes; it takes a smarter rascal than you are to hide his identity."

"That is, that an accomplished scoundrel like you could do it better?"

"You are not here to bandy epithets with me!"

"Begorra, thin, ye should be more sparing in the use o' them yourself!"

"You don't deny your identity?"

"Begorra! I'm not here either to admit or deny! My business is to represent Mr. Dale, and the collection of the amount that his mortgage calls for?"

"How did you get possession of that mortgage?"

"Troth, that's my business also!"

"How do I know that you have possession of it, and that you are empowered to collect it?"

"Ye have my word."

"I wouldn't take your word for the value of a sixpence."

"Thin we may consider that our business is closed!" and the speaker made a movement as though about to rise and take his departure.

"Sit down!" cried Mix; "although I wouldn't take your simple statement, there are corroborative circumstances that lead me to believe that you are really in possession of the mortgage, and that you have power to act!"

"That was a lucky afterthought for you!"

"Why don't you make your proposition?"

"That's for you to do, as I've told ye!"

"Your orders are to get the money for the face of that mortgage?"

"Exactly."

"I know better! You don't expect to get a dollar."

"And what do you expect, then—that I'm to give it to ye?"

"No!"

"What do ye expect, then?"

"Shall I tell you, frankly?"

"If it's possible for ye to be frank, ye may, if ye please!"

"You want me to perjure myself, sacrifice my honor, and surrender the right of my inheritance to my uncle's estate! Do you see, I understand the price that you demand?"

"How would ye pay that price?"

"By swearing that a true story is false!"

"What true story?"

"The story of Hepsy Doane."

"Ye mane that I want ye to make a confession?"

"You might call it a confession."

"Foster Mix, I wouldn't give ye forty cints in money for that confession! Your perjuries and forgeries will be proved in a court of justice!"

Foster Mix looked bewildered and perplexed.

He had calculated, beyond a question, that the mortgage had been purchased to extort this confession from him.

Upon receiving the answer that he did, he was satisfied at once that he had made a miscalculation, and, after a moment, he said:

"What do you require from me in satisfaction of that mortgage?"

"The money."

Foster Mix arose to his feet and paced the study floor.

He was greatly excited and visibly betrayed his agitation.

At length he resumed his seat, and leaning his face toward his guest, he fairly hissed:

"I know that you lie! You do not want the money! Now tell me, what you do want!"

During all this exciting interview Captain Mike had continued as calm and placid as a maid, but when this last question was addressed to him a fierce look settled upon his features, as he answered:

"Produce the body of Captain Frank Magruder, and this mortgage is yours."

"Oh! that's the theory you're working on, is it?"

"Yes, that's the theory I'm working on, Foster Mix!"

"Well, you are on the wrong scent. I know nothing about Captain Frank Magruder."

Captain Mix flashed his glance straight in the eyes of Foster Mix as he replied:

"Now it's my turn. You lie!"

Upon hearing this epithet the face of Foster Mix became livid with rage.

He thrust his hand behind him, and withdrew it armed with a glittering bowie-knife, as he sprung from his seat and swung his arm aloft, as though intending to bury the murderous blade in the neck of the man sitting opposite him.

Rapid as his movement was, it was not quick enough for the carrying out of his purpose.

As the glittering blade flashed in the air the muzzle of a pistol covered his heart, and a forefinger of Captain Mike was upon the trigger, as he said, quietly:

"I was prepared for ye, murderer!"

Foster Mix's hand fell to his side, and reseating himself he cast the bowie-knife aside, saying, with a derisive laugh:

"It was not your pistol that checked me! I recollected, just in time, that a gentleman could not recognize an insult from a vulgar cur like you."

"Faith! thin I'm thankful to your gentility for the sparing of my life; but I'm afraid that had your arm descended an inch there'd be a bullet in the door there behind ye, but it would have gone through you first."

"Well, let that matter pass, and bring this business to a close."

"All right. I'm not quarrelsome, but accommodating. Ye can have business or shooting at your pleasure!"

"My aunt thinks that by getting possession of that mortgage she has driven me to the wall; but there you are all mistaken. You say that you want the money for it."

"I do."

"Bring that mortgage to this house one week from to-day, and the money will be here to cancel it."

"One week from to-day?"

"Yes."

"I'll be here; and now unlock that door, if ye please."

Foster Mix turned the key in the door, and Captain Mike said:

"Pass out before me, if ye please! faith I niver turn me back on an enemy or an assassin."



A muttered curse fell from the lips of Foster Mix as he obeyed.

His native coolness and self-possession enabled him to bear this biting taunt only because in his secret heart he felt that the day of revenge was but one week distant.

Captain Mike's horse stood at the door, and as the old man leaped into the saddle and rode away, he turned and said, in significant tones:

"If the Lord spares my life, I'll be here one week from to-day."

"If the Lord spares your life!" was the low-muttered remark of Foster Mix, as he turned and re-entered his house.

As Captain Mike rode along the road, he muttered to himself:

"Foster Mix is not as smart a rogue as I thought he was, or else he gives me credit for bein' a bigger fool than he has reason to. 'It's a purty schaine altogether, barrin' I didn't know better than to carry my body into that house wid the mortgage in my possession. No, no, me frind,' continued Captain Mike, 'ye'll not catch me that way.'"

Our old hero had proceeded about a mile on his journey, when he saw a horseman coming from an opposite direction."

As the strange horseman drew near, he brought his horse to a halt and asked:

"Am I far from the residence of Mr. Foster Mix?"

There was a cunning twinkle in Captain Mike's eyes as he replied:

"Well, ye have about fourteen miles to ride."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the horseman.

"Why, I didn't think it was more than a mile."

"Oh, ye didn't? Well, may be ye're right. Faith, ye oughther know, as I'll take me oath ye had a fine opportunity to study the distance whin ye followed me, night before last!" and with this strange question: "Was ye frightened whin I let the hound loose?" Mike drove on.

#### CHAPTER XLIII.

It would be difficult to describe the expression that rested upon Radway Mead's face as, with a derisive laugh, Captain Mike rode ahead.

The former saw at a glance that the old man had identified him when he followed upon his track two nights before.

The exclamation that fell from Radway Mead's lips was:

"Curse that fellow! If he ain't the sharpest old devil I ever came across, I'll eat my hat!"

"That's a swate bird to try to play off on an old soger like me," was Captain Mike's remark, as he cantered along.

Mike had proceeded about a mile after his meeting with Radway Mead, when he beheld an old negro standing beside the road just ahead of him.

As Captain Mike drew nearer, he recognized the pedestrian as being old Uncle Pete.

"Hold on dar!" cried the old negro, when Captain Mike arrived abreast of him.

"Halloo, Uncle Pete—is that you?"

"Yes, cap'n, dat am me, shuah!"

"Then ye recognized me, did ye, me old boy?"

"Yes, sar, I knowed yer de oder day right off, when yer come ober to de house."

"Be the powers!" exclaimed Mike, "I might as well carry me card in the peak of me hat as to put on a disguise."

"Look yere, cap'n," said old Uncle Pete, "I'se jis got somet'ing 'portant ter tell yer."

"Yer have?"

"Shuah!"

"Well, out with it."

"Yer am a friend ob Mrs. Deane and Zenie?"

"Faith! I'd give up me life for aither one of thim!"

"Yer am shuah dat yer ain't no fren' ob my massa's?"

"Begorra! I'd hang yer master to-morrow if I was able!"

"If yer am a fren' ob Miss Zenie, yer mus' be a fren' ob de cap'n dat am missin'?"

At one bound Captain Mike was out of his saddle, and standing in the road beside the old negro.

"What about the missing captain?" asked Captain Mike, eagerly.

"Nuffin."

"What the devil are ye blatherin' about thim, ye ould fool!"

"I'se cumin' dar, I'se cumin' dar, yer jes' be easy."

"Be the powers! but ye're a long time comin'!"

"I seed somet'in' queer down ter de house, cap'n."

"Ye have?"

"Yes, sah."

"Well, what have ye seen down there that's so queer?"

"Don't be in a hurry, cap'n, I'se cumin', I'se cumin' dar."

"Well, come along thim, Uncle Pete, or I'll have to toss yer on the horse and ride it out of yer."

"It am somet'in' 'portant, cap'n."

"It ought to be, by the time you're takin' to deliver yersel' of it."

The old negro rolled his eyes around until three quarters of the whites shone, when, bringing his staff down on the ground, he said:

"Yer know de hous' down dar?"

"Begorra! yes, I know the house down there!"

"Well, ebery day, cap'n, dey cook a meal."

"What the devil would they do? Ate their food raw?"

"Don't yer see, cap'n—don't yer see?"

"I'm blowed if I do!"

"But dey cook a meal dat nobody eats."

"Why the devil don't ye ate it yersel' thim?"

"Cap'n Mike, yer very dumb."

"Faith, I must be, whin I don't understand this matter, as plain as yer makin' it."

"Somebody must eat dat meal, cap'n."

"Begorra! ye jist said nobody eats it."

"Dat ain't what I mean."

"What the devil do yer mane?"

"Who eats dat meal what nobody else eats, eh, cap'n?"

Suddenly a revelation flashed upon Captain Mike's mind.

His whole countenance became illuminated by a bright thought, as he exclaimed:

"Begorra! I must be dumb that I didn't see what ye was drivin' at. What yer mean ter tell me is, that every day there's a meal cooked and is carried away to be given to somebody that ye don't know anything about?"

"Dat's it, cap'n; dat yere meal goes away wery mysterious."

"There may be somebody sick in the house?"

"No, sar!"

"There may be somebody concealed there?"

"Dat's what's de matter, cap'n!"

"See here, Pete, who sleeps in the house?"

"De massa and dat ar Mead; de hous'keeper, de massa's body-servant, de cook, and two yaller gals."

"That's all, eh?"

"Yes, sah."

Captain Mike indulged a moment's thought, and then asked:

"What idea have you got about this matter, Uncle Pete?"

"I don't tol' nuffin' 'bout it, only dat I tell you!"

"Does your master take charge of that meal himself?"

"Yes, sah!"

"Ye must say nothing about what you've told me, Uncle Pete?"

"No, sah; dis chile am dumb!"

"Be the powers! if all the nagurs were as dumb as you are, it's a knowin' race they'd be! But go home, now, Uncle Pete, and keep yer eyes and ears open, and your mouth shut."

"Yes, sah!" answered Pete; "dis yere chile know 'nuf for dat!" and the old negro, staff in hand, started homeward along the road.

Captain Mike leaped into his saddle and proceeded homeward also.

During the balance of his ride the old man was buried in deep thought.

During the next day our old hero remained about the house, but when night fell, he came forth, dressed in a very peculiar manner.

The yellow wig had been discarded; the clothes which he had worn had been replaced by a pair of hunter's buckskin pants, a roundabout of the same material, a skull cap, and in place of boots he wore a pair of moccasins.

This semi-Indian uniform appeared to cause him instinctively to adopt the stealthy tread of a red-skin on the trail, as he moved around toward the stables, and proceeded to the kennel where the hound was chained.

Unleashing the dog, he held something toward the animal to smell.

The article proved to be the blood-stained hat that had been found upon the road that fatal night when Captain Magruder had disappeared.

There was something mysterious in the actions of the old man, as, followed by the dog, he moved down toward the road, muttering:

"Begorra! if I live to see to-morrow's sun-

light, I hope one glance will rest upon the face of the long-lost!"

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

THE disclosures made by the old negro, Uncle Pete, concerning that mysterious extra meal which nobody eat, confirmed the suspicion which for a long time had agitated Captain Mike's mind.

The object of his present mission was to investigate still further.

As he moved along toward the residence of Foster Mix, he indulged the hope that he would not return alone.

It was after midnight when he arrived in sight of the house.

Everything was quiet and still about, save the hum of the rain as it beat upon the surrounding trees, a storm having set in after Captain Mike had started on his journey.

He passed around the house several times, in order to discover if anybody was moving about.

Not the least indication did he encounter, nor could he discover the glimmer of a light through any of the windows.

"Be the powers!" he muttered, "everything is favorable thus far; and now I must be prepared for contingencies. I'm not often troubled with presentiments, but I have a sort of feelin' to-night as though there might be a bit of a scrimmage before mornin'."

Having made a complete and critical study of the surroundings, the old man withdrew to the cover of a summer-house, when he again let the hound smell the blood-stained hat, and then started him off upon the scent.

Away sped the beast, while Captain Mike stretched himself out upon a seat in the summer-house, to await developments.

Thus an hour passed, when the hound returned, tail down, spiritless, and without the least evidence of having struck a trail.

"Begorra!" muttered Mike, as he gazed upon the dog, "the hound's been beat! Divil a trail has he found! I wish I could take him wid me; but as intelligent as he is in trying to tell me somethin' wid his growls and low barks, faith! he might be givin' me away, so I'll lave him here."

Captain Mike had his own method of conveying his instructions to the hound.

The mode adopted upon this occasion was to toss the gold-corded hat upon the floor, and order the beast to watch it.

So well did he understand the nature of the dog, that he felt satisfied the faithful animal would remain steadfastly on guard to the death.

Having settled matters as far as the hound was concerned, the old man drew from his pocket a dark lantern.

While preparing it for use he remarked:

"Begorra! I feel more like a midnight burglar wid this toy, thim a soldier in the performance of his duty."

Having adjusted the lantern satisfactorily, he drew a long bowie-knife from his kelt, and with the coolness of a barber testing his razor, examined the edge of the formidable weapon.

"That's all right," he muttered, as he drew a pair of pistols from his pocket and examined them carefully, adding: "Be the powers! if there's a hole made under Foster Mix's skin before mornin', it's himself 'll be responsible for the puncture."

Again commanding the dog to watch, Captain Mike moved stealthily through the rain toward the house.

Country people, especially in the South before the war, experienced but slight dread of burglars, consequently their houses were very insecurely closed at night.

Captain Mike had but little difficulty in entering the home of Foster Mix.

Once within, he had no trouble in finding his way to the cellar.

Having been born in the old country, where, in his youth, he had often heard of dungeons under the walls of country houses, he had become possessed with the idea that he might find something of the sort beneath the residence of the villain Mix.

The latter's home was an old-fashioned stone building, having been built prior to the Revolution, when houses were built so as to stand siege from roving tribes of hostile red men.

Once in the cellar the old man slid the mask of his lantern and flashed the light around in every direction.

What he saw was not encouraging to the ultimate result of his search.



He found the cellar a very ordinary one, and his first cursory glance did not reveal any sign of secret vault or dungeon.

"Be the powers!" he muttered, as he stealthily moved around, "I'm satisfied that I've taken a wrong course this time."

He had about concluded his investigations, and had determined to leave the cellar and continue the search in another direction, when the ray of light from his lantern flashed upon the part of a cross wall, which caused him to give a sudden start and utter a low exclamation of delight.

Going nearer to the wall, his eye fell upon an iron door that had been unhinged and set to one side.

This would not have furnished any clue were it not that he discovered in the wall a portion freshly bricked up.

It required but one glance to satisfy him that this was a passage-way that had been closed.

So great was the old man's agitation upon making this discovery that he trembled in every limb.

He had not the least doubt but this had originally been a passage-way that had been closed; and the conclusion which flashed over his mind was, that he was upon the eve of solving the wonderful mystery of Captain Magruder's disappearance.

It required but a moment or two for the old man to recover from the first shock of the discovery and regain his ordinary nerve and coolness.

Setting down his lantern he cast a look around for some implement to assist him in removing the newly laid bricks.

For awhile he was baffled in the discovery of anything which would answer his purpose; but at length he bethought himself of his bowie-knife.

"Begorra! me brave blade!" he muttered, "probably this is a better use to put ye to than prying apart the ribs of the owner of this house."

Proceeding deliberately to work, he speedily succeeded in removing some of the bricks, and thrusting his hand into the aperture discovered, with a thrill of delight, that the passage-way had been closed by a single wall of brick.

After this discovery it did not take long to remove sufficient of the wall to enable him to crawl through.

The way now being open, he took his lantern, and creeping through, found himself in a second subterranean apartment, far different from the ordinary cellar which he had just left.

*Débris* of all kinds was scattered in every direction, including moldy wine cases, old pieces of antique furniture, old-fashioned weapons, and other articles that had been in use probably a century before.

As Captain Mike flashed the rays of his lantern around, he began muttering to himself as usual:

"Be the powers! I belave I'll have me fun for my pains afther all! I can see nothin' here to indicate that this musty old hole has recently been occupied."

After hunting around awhile, stumbling first over one object, then another, Captain Mike remarked, while rubbing his shins after barking them against an old chest:

"Faith! I'm not goin' to give it up this way; that passage was blocked up for some reason, and it was only by accident that I discovered it. Now, begorra! I'm going to sit myself down on this chest and take it aisy until I discover something else."

Suiting the action to the word he seated himself upon the chest, after having placed his lantern upon a shelf, and began to revolve matters over in his mind.

"There's one thing certain," said he, "if I've not found the key to the mystery I'm afther, it's ten to wan that I may root out some other divilment, and— Hold on, now, what's that?" he added, suddenly, as his eyes rested upon a certain portion of an additional cross wall.

The object that had attracted Captain Mike's eye was a dilapidated red curtain which depended from the ceiling.

The old man had noticed this before, but what attracted his attention the second time was the fact that the curtain moved, as though swayed gently by a current of air.

"Faith!" said Mike, "but I thought that was a bundle of old clothes hanging there; but I'll be hanged if it don't look like a curtain, and it moved. Faith! now, I'll watch to see if me eyes desave me."

## CHAPTER XLV.

CAPTAIN MIKE took his lantern down from the shelf, and flashing its rays directly upon the faded old damask curtain, watched it intently.

In a moment he saw it gently sway backward and forward.

The movement was almost imperceptible, yet move it did unquestionably.

"Be the powers!" exclaimed Mike, "that curtain moves! Now, thin, it couldn't move of its own accord, that's sure."

Taking his cocked pistol in his hand, he set his lantern down, and stepping on tiptoe, advanced to the curtain and jerked it aside, when not only a passage was discovered, but the narrow steps of a stairway.

"By the bones of a live soger! but here is a go! Now, thin, where the devil do them stairs lade to? By Jove, knowing what a devil Foster Mix is, I may be pinetrating to the infernal regions! Divil a care have I! I'm not goin' back nor down, but up!"

Stealthily and with a tread as noiseless as the movement of a shadow, Captain Mike began ascending the stairs.

He had advanced but a few steps, when he was startled by hearing an indistinct murmur of voices.

He halted and listened. After a moment he whispered, as he tightly grasped his pistol:

"It's as well to be on guard. Faith, it was with this same little toy that I laid a ghost a time back. Who knows but I may have a clane blaze at a rale divil before long?"

Ascending further a few steps, he reached a platform from whence a door opened into an apartment, where a second flight of stairs ascended still higher.

Arrived opposite this door, Captain Mike again halted and listened, hardly daring to breathe lest his presence should be betrayed, as it was that hour of the night when even the slightest rustle might be heard.

It took but a moment or two for the old man to arrive at certain conclusions.

In the first place, he recognized the voices that he heard as those of Foster Mix and Radway Mead.

He also decided that the passage-way in which he was standing ran beside the study of the owner of the house, and its existence was probably known to him alone.

The door by which he was standing, he also concluded, was a concealed one that led from the library into the secret passage.

As Captain Mike stood there, it became a question whether he should remain and listen to the conversation of the two villains, or continue his explorations.

He knew that he still had several hours before daylight, and yet, after all, he felt that to listen was less important than to effect a rescue, in case he was upon the right track.

Finally he decided to continue his search.

Ascending the second flight of stairs, he came to another platform, but there was no door leading from this, only a third flight of stairs.

Upon ascending the latter, he encountered a door directly in front of him, instead of on the side, like the one below.

"Begorra!" muttered Captain Mike, "now, thin, I find meself in a quare dilemma! Suppose, upon opening this door, I should find meself in the prisence of some female? Faith, the very divil would be to pay, thin!"

He put his ear to the door and listened, but did not hear the least sound within.

"By the powers! I don't know what I shall do. If there's a gal in that room, she'll scream like the divil upon finding a strange man there, and I wouldn't blame her. Troth, I felt like screaming meself once whin a chamber-maid got in me room by mistake—but it was wid laughter!"

Again he listened, and at length tried the door, but it was locked. An examination revealed the fact that it was barred and bolted on the side facing him.

Upon noiselessly drawing these bolts and again trying the door, he found that it yielded, and the way was open.

Still he hesitated about entering; being an old bachelor, he was particularly sensitive about getting into the room of a sleeping female, either white or black.

At length he came to the conclusion that he must do either one thing or the other.

Finally he pushed the door inward, and holding his lantern down on a level with the floor, peeped in.

What he saw emboldened him to advance

further, and pushing the door wide open, he walked straight into the room.

"By heavens!" was the exclamation that escaped from his lips as he glanced around the apartment. "I've found the dungeon, but the prisoner's gone! Can it be, like many a prisoner before him, he has been led forth to execution—or rather, has he been murdered at last?"

The apartment in which Captain Mike found himself was unquestionably a dungeon.

The room was completely walled in by solid masonry.

Light and air were admitted through one small window about eighteen inches in height, and not more than four inches in width.

This window was barred by iron bars at least an inch in thickness.

The old man discovered another fact—that the door through which he had entered was made of solid iron.

The discovery of the dungeon alone would not have presented half the probabilities to the old man, were it not for the articles he found in it.

In one corner was a narrow iron bedstead, and near that an iron stool. In the center of the stone floor there was an inch staple, to which was still attached a heavy chain.

There was bed-clothing upon the iron bedstead, which showed that it had been recently occupied.

Advancing to this bed, with the aid of the light from his lantern, Captain Mike instituted a thorough examination, and was rewarded by finding a shirt, having worked upon it the same initials that were upon the handkerchief presented by old Uncle Pete to Zenie.

The old man found other startling proofs, sufficient to satisfy him that the missing man, Captain Frank Magruder, had not only been alive the last twenty-four hours, but that he had been an occupant of that very dungeon.

Captain Mike seated himself upon the iron bedstead, and began to think.

He was a keen man, and very capable in balancing probabilities.

His final conclusion was, that Captain Magruder had been removed within a few hours.

As the old man thought more and more upon the subject, his face began to brighten, as the probability suggested itself that Captain Frank had only been removed, and not murdered.

"Had they wished to murder the poor boy," said he, "they could find no more convenient place than this iron-barred dungeon. Faith! a prisoner could be starved to death in this hole and the world niver be the wiser for it!"

For some time longer Mike ruminated, when suddenly a thought appeared to strike him, and rising to his feet, he exclaimed:

"Begorra! that's how to do it. It's here the hound can take the scent; and once more upon the trail, if the dog can't follow it, it's little use for me to try."

Noiselessly Captain Mike descended the stairs, not even stopping to listen to the conversation of the two men in the library.

Once down in the cellar, he discovered a direct passage of egress, and quickly made his way to the summer-house where he had left the dog.

Taking the hound with him, he returned, leading him through the cellar up the secret stairway to the stone room.

The hound had not been released a minute in the room before he made a startling discovery that had escaped his master's notice.

From a corner of the room he pawed out a blood-stained towel.

As Captain Mike took the article in his hand and examined it, a groan burst from his lips, as he murmured:

"Merciful Heaven! it's stained with fresh blood! Dead or alive, I must find him this time."

By aid of the bed-clothing, the old man managed to give the hound the right scent.

True to his instincts, the beast followed the trail down to the door of the library leading into the secret passage, but beyond that it was lost.

Captain Mike attempted to draw the beast past the door, when the animal jerked loose, and shoving his snout down by the door, uttered a low, fierce growl.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

WHILE Captain Mike was in the cellar, and was engaged in removing the obstruction closing the entrance from the main cellar into the adjoining one, two horsemen had driven up from



the wood direct to the stables, and there dismounted.

Having put away their horses, they started for the house, and entered the library, where some hours before Foster Mix had held the exciting interview described with Captain Mike.

The two night riders were Foster Mix and Radway Mead.

Upon entering the library the former had turned up the blaze of a lamp standing upon a table, and as its light was shed around the room, the fact became apparent that Radway Mead had received an ugly cut across the temple.

Both men appeared wearied, and were evidently laboring under some great excitement.

As they seated themselves at the table, Foster Mix's eyes fell upon his companion's wound, when he remarked:

"That was an ugly cut the madman gave you."

"Yes; and it was lucky we were two against one, or, manacled as he was, I would have been compelled to have disabled him to save myself."

"Well, it's an ugly job accomplished. I never felt easy while I had him confined in the house."

"It's a wonder to me," remarked Radway Mead, "that that cunning old Irishman never thought to look for him here."

"It would have required somebody well posted to have discovered that stone room; but the danger is removed, and it's my impression that the next occupant of that room will not require to be chained to that staple."

"Not unless he walks in his sleep," said Radway Mead, in a significant tone.

"So you believe in apparitions, do you?"

"Only such as a fretted imagination may conjure up."

"This house may burn down some day, and any ghost that chooses to haunt the ruins is welcome to do so."

"The only ghost that I would fear is the one on his way to the mad-house."

"Why should I fear that ghost?"

"With life there is hope that at any moment that lunatic might become free."

"How could he obtain his freedom if my instructions be carried out? and I have promised a small fortune to have them fulfilled."

"You forget that there's method in your madman's insanity; he may offer treble the sum you are to pay for his freedom—the Magruders are rich."

A smile that was simply demoniac played over the marble features of Foster Mix as he asked, in a tone of devilish significance:

"How long do you suppose I propose to pay that fellow's board?"

"As long as he lives, I suppose."

"Exactly."

"How long do you suppose he can live under confinement in a mad-house?"

"If he lives eight days," replied Foster Mix, in tones fearfully suggestive, "a certain keeper will be five thousand the worse off!"

"Ah! I was going to suggest some such precaution. The grave is the safest cell for our enemies, or those who are dangerous to us."

"You're right. I'm ready to risk disclosures from lips once sealed over by a grave-mound."

At this instant both men were startled by hearing a peculiar scratching noise.

Foster Mix was on his feet in a moment, with a cocked pistol in his hand, and he exclaimed, in a husky tone:

"What noise is that?"

The countenance of both men were ghastly as they listened on.

An instant's silence followed the first peculiar sound, but at length it was broken by a low, but distinct growl, followed by a quick, nervous bark.

"Open that door!" exclaimed Foster Mix, with a face livid.

Radway Mead sprang to his feet and opened the door leading from the large hall.

"Any one there?" asked Foster Mix, still in a husky tone of voice.

"No one."

"Then that sound came from there!" and the speaker pointed toward an opposite corner of the room.

For a moment the two men gazed at each other, and if not abject terror, at least extreme trepidation was expressed upon both their faces; at length Foster Mix reached down a double-barreled shot-gun that was slung upon the wall, and facing the corner of the room he had previously indicated, he said, as he raised both hammers of the gun:

"Open the door to the secret passage!"

Radway Mead appeared to thoroughly understand the secrets of the room, as by a peculiar movement he removed a portion of the panel or wainscoting, disclosing a door.

Noiselessly he slid the bolts of the latter, and then quickly pushed it open, while Foster Mix stood, with the shot-gun leveled, ready to blow to atoms any living object that might be discovered there.

"No one there?" he said.

"No one!" was the answer from Radway Mead.

"Are our fretted imaginations already playing us strange freaks? I could swear that I heard the growl and bark of a hound."

"So could I."

"And it came from the direction of that door."

"That is my impression."

"It hardly seems possible. Still we must investigate this matter."

Foster Mix took a small metal lamp, and after lighting it, handed it to Radway Mead, saying:

"Take this, and precede me up those stairs, but be ready to drop at an instant's warning, in case I should be compelled to shoot down an intruder."

The two men ascended the stairs, Radway Mead in advance.

When the latter arrived in front of the iron door to the stone dungeon, he observed that the heavy bolts had been slid, and that the door was on a crack.

Turning to his companion, he said, in a startled tone:

"The dungeon has been entered since we left it."

"Are you sure that you bolted the door?"

"Don't you recollect telling me to do so?"

"I do."

"And I obeyed your instructions."

"Enter the room. We must fathom this mystery to the bottom."

Upon entering the room, both men at once recognized the fact that, remarkable as it seemed, there was no doubt but what some one had penetrated that secret room.

Pointing to the bloody towel which lay upon the floor, Radway Mead said:

"I recollect throwing that bloody cloth into the corner yonder."

"This room has been entered!" was the reply, "but how under heavens any one got in here is a mystery that dumfounds me!"

"They must have come through the library?" suggested Radway Mead.

"You found the panel door bolted?"

"Yes; but whoever entered here, may have had a confederate in the house."

"They didn't go out through the library!" was the startling rejoinder; "it's less than ten minutes ago that we heard the bark of the dog."

The same idea seemed to strike both men at the same instant, as, without a word, Radway Mead turned and proceeded down the secret staircase, followed by Mix with the loaded gun.

Once in the cellar, a sight met the eyes of both men that at once explained the whole mystery. There was the walled entrance with the bricks removed, showing plainly how the intruder had accomplished his ingress and egress.

"The mystery is explained!" said Foster Mix.

"Yes; we know now how the intruder got in and out—but who was he?"

"It requires but one guess to name the man."

"Captain Mike?"

"As sure as you live, it was that old Irishman, with his infernal hound!"

"Then there's but one thing left for us to do."

"What is that?"

"Follow him! this is our only opportunity. If that man ever reaches the Deane place alive, you might as well take horse for parts unknown, for by heavens! he's got a coil around your neck now that is fatal!"

"You're right," answered Foster Mix, in tones of suppressed energy. "We'll follow him, even if we slay him under the very roof of the Deane mansion!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

At the time the hound uttered the growl and bark by the secret door, Captain Mike caught the beast by his brass collar and dragged him down the stairway, remarking:

"By the powers, Tiger, you meant well, but

it's the devil's own breeze you've raised now, my noble dog!"

Captain Mike was not only cool under perilous circumstances, but wonderfully calculative.

He was capable of taking in all the bearings of the situation at a glance.

He was not amiss in his conclusions upon this occasion.

He calculated upon the very result which really followed.

He knew that they would discover the direction from whence the growl came—that the secret passage would be examined, and the way of his presence discovered.

Neither did he question the fact but what Foster Mix would instantly conclude who the intruder was.

The old Irishman regretted that the dog had betrayed him; but as it was a thing that could not be avoided, he made up his mind to meet the issue resolutely.

He did not question, either, that he would be pursued.

"Begorra!" he muttered, as he crept forth from the house, "the battle had to come some time; as well to-night as any other. I'll not seek the scrimmage; rather will I try to avoid it. I'll go about my business, and if the worst comes to the worst, there's but two agin one!"

The old man proved his wonderful coolness by going straight to the summer-house, and securing his double-barreled gun before starting toward home.

So deliberate was the old hero in all his movements, that he had only gained the road, and was less than an eighth of a mile from the scene of his late remarkable adventures, when he heard the low bay of a couple of blood-hounds.

"Ah, ha! but they're trying a bit of my game, now!" exclaimed the old man, as the bay of the dogs fell upon his ear.

The rain had ceased to fall, the clouds had cleared away, and the rays of a three-quarter moon made beautiful the tops of the surrounding hills.

Taking a position directly in the middle of the road, and with an expression upon his face such as he had often worn when leading his company amid the shock of battle, the old soldier awaited the approach of the hounds.

Soon they came in sight, speeding along the road, with their noses to the ground, hot upon the scent of their prey.

Not a muscle of the old soldier's frame quivered, and the two hounds had just begun to utter the low barks peculiar to them when close upon their prey.

Nearer and nearer they came, like two red-eyed devils.

At last less than five yards intervened between the hounds and Captain Mike.

The dogs were running side by side, when suddenly two reports of a gun in quick succession broke the stillness.

The aim had been fatal; both charges went straight to the mark, and a second after the last report, the two ill-fated hounds lay struggling in the miry road, writhing in the agonies of death.

Like an old hunter, after dropping his game, Captain Mike began to reload his piece.

While thus engaged, he heard the clatter of horses' feet along the road, when, with a grim smile, he muttered:

"Begorra! if, in a few minutes, two human beings are writhing there beside the dogs, it will be because they invited their own doom!"

At no time during the course of our story have we been called upon to record a more daring act than the fact of this old hero calmly awaiting the approach of two determined, well-armed men who sought his life.

Captain Mike could have taken to the brush, and have escaped in that manner if he had so desired; but never in his life had he turned his back upon a foe, and he felt that it was too late to do so now.

Soon the two horsemen hove in sight.

At the same moment that Captain Mike discovered them the two horsemen recognized him also, and came to a halt.

"Scoundrel, if you value your life, lay down your gun and surrender!" called out Foster Mix.

"And place myself in the power of two red-handed murderers!"

"Surrender, or we'll shoot you down in your tracks!"

The portion of the road where Captain Mike stood was a cut through a hill, on either side of which rose high banks.



Putting out from the face of one of these banks was a huge boulder.

Knowing that he was at a disadvantage, Captain Mike, as he called out his answer, had slowly stepped backward, so as to gain the cover of the rock.

Like an experienced old soldier, he recognized the advantage of any kind of a cover.

He had just reached a point opposite the rock, when he saw one of his enemies raise his gun to his shoulder.

Simultaneously with the flash from the muzzle of the discharged weapon the old man dropped upon his face, and the charge flew harmlessly over his head.

The next instant his own gun belched forth a flash of fire, and one of the horsemen keeled from his saddle, while the other let drive two shots in quick succession.

Captain Mike felt that he was wounded, still he staggered to his feet, and discharged his remaining barrel.

His last shot proved ineffective; Foster Mix was an experienced fighter like himself, and had covered his body with his horse.

There was no time for either man to reload his gun, and both resorted to their revolvers.

A rapid fusillade followed, and was continued until both men had emptied every barrel of their pistols, and still both men were able to continue the fight.

Foster Mix was unwounded, except a slight scratch, while Captain Mike's left arm was badly shattered.

So thoroughly experienced were both of them in the use of weapons, that even amid the excitement of the bloody combat they had tallied each other's shots, and, as it was to be a struggle to the death, both drew their bowie-knives, and warily advanced for the final combat.

We have previously given our readers to understand that Foster Mix was a man of great personal courage.

He was, and well sustained his reputation upon this occasion.

Not for an instant had he given the least sign of flinching; his conduct from the first had evinced a dogged determination to conquer or die.

Had Captain Mike had the use of both arms, he would have proved an equal match for Foster Mix, despite his age.

It was a terrible moment when those two men approached each other, each with a formidable bowie-knife grasped in his hand.

"I've waited for this moment, Foster Mix!" said Captain Mike, in low, fierce tones.

"And so have I!" was the reply, in tones equally fierce and threatening.

"Faith, I've settled one of my assassins, and when I've sent you to your divil master, I shall feel that my last battle has been fought."

Mike's remark that he had settled one of his assassins was an allusion to the fact that Radway Mead lay weltering in his blood, while the rays of the moon glittered upon his ghastly features.

This ill-fated youth had fallen a victim to Captain Mike's first discharge; as he had reeled from the saddle he had died before reaching the ground.

Speedy and terrible had been his doom; and still, there in the close vicinity of where this ghastly corpse lay, Captain Mike and Foster Mix were engaged in a fearful struggle that could only terminate in the death of one or both of them.

Warily they advanced toward each other.

Captain Mike was cautious, because of his wounded arm, while Foster Mix was equally so, because of his knowledge of the old man's powers.

Captain Mike was about to make some taunting remark, when he felt himself growing dizzy.

With a groan of anguish he staggered forward, but, alas! the quantity of blood that flowed from his wound had weakened him.

Desperately the old man struggled to keep his feet, but his lion heart was not proof against the weakness of human nature, and with one expiring thrust with his knife, he sunk helpless and insensible at the feet of his would-be assassin—Foster Mix.

#### CHAPTER XLVIII.

VILLAIN as he had become, there still remained in the bosom of Foster Mix a spark of the manhood of a gentleman and a soldier.

He could have shot Captain Mike down like a dog when the latter was in the fullness and strength of life, but corrupt as he was, he

shrunk from striking him as he lay helpless and bleeding at his feet.

"Hang it!" muttered Foster Mix. "I hope the old scoundrel is dead."

"And I hope not!" suddenly came a voice, as the figure of a man, with pale face and tattered raiment, confronted Foster Mix.

"Great heavens! you here?" exclaimed the latter, starting back as though an apparition had suddenly faced him.

"Yes, perjurer! forger! murderer! I am here at last to call you to account for your villainies!"

And as the strange man, who had so suddenly appeared, spoke, he aimed a pistol directly at the heart of Foster Mix.

Still the latter did not flinch, but answered, coolly:

"I have discharged my last shot, but fire!"

"No, sir! Scoundrel and assassin as you are, wronged as I have been by you, I would scorn to shoot you down in cold blood!"

"Captain Magruder," said Foster Mix, "this is not a moment for explanations. You seek my life, and it is better for me that you should be dead. The advantage is with you. Avail yourself of it. Fire!"

Captain Magruder's eye fell upon the knife still grasped in the hand of Captain Mike.

Stooping down and possessing himself of the weapon, he said:

"Now we are on equal terms; defend yourself!" and Captain Magruder made a rush at his enemy.

The fight between Foster Mix and the injured Captain Magruder proved to be a long and desperate one, but in the end the man who had been wronged triumphed over the calculating villain who had wronged him.

Himself bleeding from several wounds, Captain Magruder stood over the form of Foster Mix.

At this instant a number of men appeared upon the scene.

It is not necessary for the purpose of our story to record in detail what followed.

The dead body of Radway Mead was carried to the house of Foster Mix; the latter, still breathing, but insensible, was carried there also.

At the command of Captain Magruder a vehicle was procured, and just after daylight the still insensible form of the brave old man, Captain Mike, was carried into the Deane mansion.

The men who had assisted in removing the wounded had not recognized Captain Magruder, but at the Deane mansion, where his person was well known, he was instantly recognized.

He appeared to them like one suddenly risen from the dead.

Soon the story flew from mouth to mouth that the missing and supposed murdered man, Captain Magruder, had reappeared in life.

In the meantime skillful physicians had been sent for.

Through their efforts the faithful old hero, Captain Mike, was restored to consciousness.

After the administering of stimulants the terrible truth was announced to the old man that it would be necessary to amputate his arm.

"Go ahead!" was the cool reply. "Faith, it's little further use I'll have for it now!"

Languidly the sufferer glanced about the room, when his eye suddenly fell upon the form of Captain Magruder.

Instantly his countenance brightened.

Pointing with his uninjured arm, he asked, eagerly:

"Who's that?"

"Don't you recognize me, my old friend?" asked Captain Magruder.

"Is it Captain Frank?"

"It is."

"In life? or am I decaved by a strange fancy?"

"You are not deceived, my old friend."

"Give me yer hand, me boy! Faith, I wish I could grasp yours with both of mine, but, be jabers, the doctors have cut the other one off."

"Not yet," observed one of the doctors; "but I am sorry to say it is necessary to do so to save your life!"

"Yer sorry ter cut off me arm, is that what yer sayin'? Begorra, ye can cut off both arms if ye have a moind, and me head, too, now that Captain Frank is safe and alive!"

To the astonishment of the surgeons, the old Irishman not only refused stimulants, but declined taking anything, and submitted to the operation of amputation with the same coolness that he would have submitted himself to a barber to have his hair cut.

It was nearly a week before Captain Mike was sufficiently recovered to converse with his young friend, Captain Magruder, in whose behalf he had dared and suffered so much.

One afternoon young Magruder was sitting at his bedside, when Captain Mike asked the question:

"Has a message been sent to Mrs. Deane and the dear girl?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"And have ye heard from them?"

"Yes; they are on their way home."

"Thank Heaven for that! Have they heard that ye are alive and well?"

"Yes, Captain Mike, the fact has been advertised in every paper in the Union."

"As a piece of sensational news, I suppose?"

"Probably."

"Now, thin, captain, tell me about Foster Mix. Have ye heard anything from him?"

"I have."

"Is he livin'?"

"He is."

"Do ye know how the fight terminated that I had wid him? This is the first opportunity I've had to spake about that."

Captain Magruder related all the circumstances that had happened upon that fatal night after Mike had fallen insensible, from loss of blood, at the feet of his enemy.

"And it was you who fought him at last?"

"Yes."

"Faith, how mysterious are the ways of Providence. I gave out jist in time for ye ter be yer own avenger."

"It appears so."

"And ye say Foster Mix is livin'?"

"Yes."

"Is there any chance of his final recovery?"

"Yes; but he will be a cripple for life."

"Captain, ye have somethin' to tell me."

"I suppose you would like to hear what happened to me these many months that I have been missing?"

"No, no, not now; reserve that until me poor darlin' is here to hear the first relation of yer trial from yer own lips."

"What else have I to tell you, then?"

"About Foster Mix. What proceedings have been taken under the law for the scrimmage we had all 'round?"

Captain Magruder smiled, as he replied:

"Well, we are all under bail."

"Who's all?"

"Foster Mix, yourself, and I."

"Ah, thin, that's the ind of that part of it!"

"Probably so; it will be considered a duel, merely."

"I'm glad of that. Faith, I've had enough of the law."

At this moment a great commotion was heard below stairs.

"They're comin'!" exclaimed Captain Mike.

An instant later the invalid's words were confirmed, as the bedroom door flew open, and the beautiful Zenie, followed by her mother, with faces radiant with joy, entered the room.

"Hip, hip, hurrah!" feebly exclaimed Captain Mike, adding, humorously: "Hug as much as ye please, children, me face is turned to the wall!"

#### CHAPTER XLIX.

A MONTH passed.

The shadow that had hung over the Deane mansion had vanished, as it was ardently hoped by the occupants of that grand old home, forever.

Captain Magruder had just returned from Washington in a brand-new uniform, and a year's leave of absence from the secretary of war.

The young officer was as handsome and sparkling as ever.

Zenie, too, had recovered her health and bright looks, and the trial through which she had passed had matured, but not marred, her resplendent beauty.

The brave old soldier, Captain Mike, also, aided by a naturally strong constitution, had so far recovered as to join the party in the drawing-room.

It was evening, and Captain Magruder had been summoned to redeem his promise to relate his adventures, from the time he parted with Captain Mike upon that fatal night when his blood-stained hat was found by the road-side.

"Now, see here," said the old Irishman, "it was you got me tried for me life wid yer tricks, an' now, ye can just tell us what ye did wid yerself."



Zenie was sitting on a low stool at her lover's feet, when the latter began his narration by saying:

"A happier heart never beat in a human breast than throbbed in my bosom upon that night when I parted from our old friend here. After leaving him I started my horse upon a canter, and had proceeded nearly an eighth of a mile from where I left him."

"By the powers, then," interrupted Mike, "those two gentlemen swore truly when they said they met ye at the cross-roads."

"Yes, I remember meeting two gentlemen at the cross-roads."

"Thin how the divil was it that they murdered ye at the very spot where I parted from ye, and where yer hat was found red wid yer blood?"

"I'm going to explain that to you, my dear old friend; I can now see why it was that the attack was made at that particular spot."

"But how the divil came ye at that spot, me boy?"

"Because it was their design to murder or capture me just at the point where I parted from you!"

"So that I might be accused of yer murder?"

"That was evidently their design."

"Well, go on, now, an' tell us how they got ye back there."

"By a man's running after me, and calling out that your horse had fallen with you, and that you were badly injured."

"The villains! and wid that story they brought ye back?"

"Yes."

"And it was for concern of me that you got into the whole scrape?"

"Not by a long shot; it was their intention to capture me at all hazards."

"Well, go on, me boy; but this is a strange story, surely."

"It was not their intention to kill me; my capture alone was all that they desired."

"Well, go on; sure it was a mysterious capture they made; and, by the powers! in the end they captured me, too, on the strength of it. But, go on, and divil a word more will I interrupt ye wid till yer story is all told."

"Believing the man's statement to be true, I turned my horse about and hastened back; and when I reached the spot where I had parted from Captain Mike, I was suddenly surrounded by six ruffians, and before I was aware of their intention I was seized and dragged from my horse."

"An' didn't ye show fight, captain?" exclaimed old Mike, excitedly.

"I did, but I was unable to draw my pistols. All I could do was to use my feet vigorously, as two great, strong fellows had my arms pinioned."

"An' did ye give any of thim a lift in the belly?"

"I certainly knocked two of them down, and might eventually have freed myself, but I was shot at, and finally felled to the ground with a bludgeon."

During this recital thus far, the old one-armed hero, Captain Mike, betrayed the utmost excitement, and at length he exclaimed:

"Be the powers! but I wish I'd been there, me boy, and atwane the two of us but we would have laid thim scoundrels and murderers well out. But go on wid yer story. Faith, I promised not to interrupt ye, but I am at it again, I see—but go on! go on!"

"After I was struck down, I knew nothing until I opened my eyes, and found myself lying in the soft mud, on the bank of a river."

"An' it was ye, after all, that shot that black rascal whose body we found there?"

"I will tell you all about it, my old friend."

"Oh, yes—upon me word, but I was not aware that I was interrupting ye ag'in; but go on, an' tell us how ye laid that black assassin out stiff an' dead."

Resuming his narration, Captain Magruder said:

"When I found myself lying in that condition, my first idea was to effect my escape."

"A moment's reflection convinced me that the fellows thought that I was dead, and I hoped to avail myself of this impression to make my escape."

"They were all engaged in launching a flat-bottomed boat, and I commenced rolling myself over and over, intending to gain the cover of the meadow-grass and then steal away."

Unfortunately, one of the fellows, a great, fierce negro, observed my movements, and ad-

vanced toward me with a knife in his hand, probably intending to cut my throat.

"From habit I instinctively clapped my hand to my pistol pocket."

"Fortunately my Derringer had been, by some oversight, left undisturbed, and my hand grasped it."

"Thank Heaven for that!" exclaimed Captain Mike, with mild enthusiasm, his old face all in a glow.

"The fellow had seen me move, and came toward me with his knife poised to deal me my death-blow, when I raised my pistol and fired."

"An' ye killed him, sure?"

"I saved my life. Had I not fired as I did, the assassin would have carried out his purpose."

"An' did that bring the other scoundrels upon ye?"

"Yes."

"By the powers! but I hope ye dropped a few more of them."

"No; they would have finished the work attempted by the man I shot but for an opportune arrival."

"And that was Foster Mix?"

"No; it was Radway Mead, the young man who had undertaken the job, as I then learned, to capture me alive."

"And where was ye taken to?"

"To the house of Foster Mix."

"And put in that dungeon he has in his house?"

"Yes; but how did you know anything about the dungeon?"

"Faith, I was in there."

"As a prisoner?"

"No, but lookin' for ye, me comrade," replied Captain Mike.

"Well, had you penetrated there sooner, you would have saved me much agony and suffering, as I will tell you."

#### CHAPTER L.

"Ah! I doubt not but that they used ye sorely in that place?"

"Yes," replied Captain Frank; "and had you been convicted as my murderer, I would never have left that place alive!"

"Thin they would have hung me first, and murdered ye after, eh? Begorra, whin I was a boy once, a lad told his mother that I hit him, and begorra, whin I met that boy again, I did hit him, well, too. Seein' as I had the credit, I thought I may as well hev the gain, and it was the same that thim villains meant by ye!"

"As a man was hung for my murder, they had concluded to kill me anyhow, eh?"

"That's jist it, captain; but go on now, an' tell what happened to ye in that dungeon."

"It is easily told. Every minute was a moment of torture, and how I preserved my sanity is still a mystery to me."

"Did they keep ye informed of what was going on outside?"

"Indeed they did, my faithful old friend, and the cruelest blow I received was the information that you had been convicted as a murderer, and even the day was named when you were to be executed."

"The devils! Little did they dreme at that time that I would be the executioner of them, at least in the end; but go on wid yer story."

"There remains little for me to tell. For some reason or other, Foster Mix became satisfied that it would not be safe to keep me longer in his house, and he set about to remove me to a worse place."

"Could there be a worse place on the face of the earth?"

"I think so. He intended to remove me to a private mad-house!"

"Faith, that's the same place where it appears that all heroes of romance are conveniently removed!" said Captain Mike, with a sly twinkle.

"Before the night when you made your way to that secret dungeon, the attempt was made to remove me."

"It must have been but a short time previous to my gettin' in there."

"It was."

"And ye showed fight, as usual?"

"How do you know that, my old friend?"

"Faith, I found the signs of a scuffle in the room, and I afterward discovered the signs of it upon the face of Foster Mix's friend and misguided assistant."

"Yes, I did make an effort to gain my freedom, and struck that young man with one of my manacled hands."

"And was ye in the house all the time that I was searching around for ye?"

"No, I was not; I was taken out by young Radway and Foster Mix, and delivered into the possession of four representatives from the mad-house."

"That was upon the same night when I had the fight with Foster Mix in the road?"

"The same night."

"And how did ye manage to get free?"

"The men became careless, and I managed to slip off the manacles from my wrists unobserved."

"And then ye gave it to them?"

"No; I left them."

"It was French lave ye took?"

"Yes, I suppose that is what you call it."

"Was ye followed, me brave captain?"

"I was."

"But ye outran the inemy like a good soldier?"

"No; I was not able to run very far. I had been too long in confinement."

"Thin how the divil did ye git away from thim fellers?"

"I secured a stout stick."

"An' left them wid sore heads?"

"Yes."

"Be the powers, captain, but I'm proud of ye! That is the good ould style we have of doin' it in Ireland!"

"After escaping from those men, I made my way toward this house, when I was attracted by the sounds of the combat between you and Foster Mix."

"An' ye came to save me?"

"I did."

"Thin I owe me life to ye, captain!"

"No; but I owe mine to you, my dear, brave, faithful old friend! Had it not been for your ceaseless vigilance and pursuit of these men, I should not be alive to-day to tell this tale."

"Thank Heaven that ye are, captain; as I believe in me heart that I couldn't have lost an arm in the cause of two better and more deservin' young people than ye two! But, let me ask ye one thing, captain; from a word that ye dropped I thought that may be, like the villains in the play, Foster Mix has repented, and ye felt bound to forgive him."

"For once, my shrewd old friend, you are mistaken."

"Faith! I'm glad of that; he's a brave man, though such a villain."

"Yes, he is personally brave, but morally a great coward."

"Well, I'm not standin' for morality; but tell me, has he done justice to our dear girl there?"

"He has; but neither for love nor from a sense of justice."

"Well, has he done it at all?"

"He has."

"And the story of Hepsy Doane has been proclaimed a lie?"

"Not exactly; but Foster Mix has signed an affidavit that he was mistaken."

"And has he sworn to it?"

"He has."

"And every shadow of suspicion has been removed from me darlin's name?"

"Yes."

"Thin, begorra! sind for an undertaker, for I'm ready to die."

"Not yet will we send for an undertaker, Captain Mike; the world can not afford to lose such a noble hero as you are just yet."

"Faith! but it's little good I can do now, wid only one arm."

"There you are wrong, Captain Mike; you have five arms to work for, and defend, and sustain you."

"You and Zenie have four of them, and I the odd one."

"Yes."

"Well, thin, niver mind the undertaker yet."

And even until this day the undertaker has not been sent for, as Captain Mike is as lively and hearty an old man to-day as there is in the State of Kentucky.

The war shortly afterward broke over the land; but as Captain Mike sympathized with both sections of the country, his sword was not drawn on either side.

We can not conclude our narrative better than to quote a remark of the old hero upon the wedding-evening of his two dear friends.

The old man had been dancing, when seeing an opportunity he approached Zenie, and said:

"Faith! darlin', it's lucky it was an arm I lost, or divil a fut could I have danced at yer weddin'!"



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